VALLEY VOICE

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Tulare Regional Medical Center Fires Entire Medical Staff of 135

Dave Adalian

Directors of the Tulare Local Health Care District (TLHCD) fired the entire medical staff at Tulare Regional Medical Center (TRMC) during an unannounced and illegal meeting, and their attorneys were back in court this week to defend additional actions the California Medical Association and Tulare County Medical Society say violate state and federal law.

"One day, in secret, the elected district board voted to fire the medical staff, all 135 of them, and replaced them with a miraculous new medical staff that included a member of the Board, his wife and someone associated with Dr. (Benny) Benzeevi (CEO of Health Care Conglomerate Associates (HCCA), which operates TRMC)," said John D. Harwell, the attorney representing the Tulare Regional Medical Center Staff (TRMCS). "(The replacement staff) just sprung out of nowhere and announced they were a new medical staff, that they had bylaws and regulations, which is just astonishing, because bylaws and regulations take months to put together, not hours."

Harwell, who has represented medical staffs and physicians at various hospitals for nearly four decades, said the actions of TLHCD's board are both illegal and completely without precedent.

"I've been doing this for 37 years, and not only I have I never seen this, I've never heard of it in the United States," he said. "It's the same as suggesting we fire them (TLHCD's elected board)."

Independence Violated

Both state and federal regulations require medical staffs maintain an independent status from the hospitals at which they work in order to establish a separation between employees who provide patient care and those responsible for the institutions' financial well-being. The law also requires those medical staffs be self-governing, electing their own executive boards and holding separate

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The Tulare County Sheriff's Department has a new drone. Courtesy/TCSO

Sheriff Boudreaux Introduces New Drone to the Board of Supervisors

Catherine Doe

The Tulare County Board of Supervisors got an unexpected treat when Sheriff Mike Boudreaux showed up to its March 8 meeting to demonstrate the department's newest piece of law enforcement equipment.

Officially referred to as an unmanned aerial system (UAS) Boudreaux displayed a demonstration model of a drone the Tulare County Sheriff's Department plans on purchasing. The drone is similar in appearance to some civilian drones used by hobbyists, except that the law enforcement's drone is incredibly advanced.

Just to qualify to operate this particular drone takes a pilot's license. The TCSD is in the process of receiving the Certificate of Authorization from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to qualify to operate the drone. The department already has a pilot qualified to undergo the training needed to fly the drone.

The law enforcement drone can fly a mile-and-a-half away and has an advanced surveillance system mounted on top of it that can take a live feed video up to two miles away. It can be airborne up to one hour depending on the conditions and can go 5,000 feet up into the air. Restrictions by the FAA limit the drone to 400 feet so it does not interfere with manned aircraft.

According to the TCSD the drone "saves money, enhances safety, saves lives and can be utilized across a myriad of public safety disciplines." The drone saves money in the sense it's capabilities can take the place of using an airplane for law enforcement that can be hugely expensive. The drone can also take the place of a dozen sheriff department personnel on a search and rescue.

The system will provide real-time

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Rudy Mendoza Running for State Assembly District 26 Again

Catherine Doe

On March 10, the day before filing closed, Rudy Mendoza declared his candidacy for California State Assembly District 26. In an election year that has already produced many surprises, a rematch between Woodlake Mayor Rudy Mendoza and Freshman Assemblyman Devon Mathis could inject some welcome excitement into local elections.

Ruben Macareno, Tulare County Democrat Central Committee chairman, has also declared his candidacy for District 26. Because registered Republicans have a 14-point advantage over Democrats in the district, the two winners of the June primary could be Mathis and Mendoza, both of whom are Republican. California's "top two" primary system sends the two top vote-getters to the November General Election regardless of party. The district encompasses all

MENDOZA continued on **5 »**

Visalia Council Looking to Put Sales Tax Bump on November Ballot

Nancy Vigran

A ½ cent tax initiative is one-step closer to being placed on the November ballot with the Visalia City Council voting unanimously for staff to move forward with community outreach on the issue.

Visalia has seen a steady decline in sales tax income during the past 35 years with a decline in residents shopping local. In fact, in 1980, 53% of personal income was spent on taxable sales compared with today, in which 33% is spent, said Eric Frost, administrative staff member.

City council has been looking into the possibility of the ballot measure for close to one year – the belief currently is that a measure would pass by a 62-68% margin, Frost said.

In May of 2015, the council directed staff members to meet with two citizen committees to examine the city's financial situation and make recommendations on how the council should proceed if it chooses to put a revenue measure on the ballot.

The Citizen Advisory Committee and an ad hoc committee, the Ballot Measure Advisory Committee, met from August, 2015, to January of this year, and presented their recommendations to city council, each recommending the ½ cent sales tax measure with strong accountability measures.

SALES TAX continued on **11 »**

Council Votes to End Air Service Subsidies, Airline Still Interested

Nancy Vigran

Although the Visalia City Council voted to forego selecting another air carrier in favor of a government "buyout" program, the city's airport may still see passenger service in the not-too-distant future.

The council voted unanimously to shift from the Essential Air Service (EAS) program, a Department of Transportation program that subsidizes airlines to serve small cities like Visalia, to the Community Flexibility Pilot Program (CFPP), which pays cities to forego EAS – and subsidized air service – for 10 years in favor of a direct payment of two years' worth of subsidies.That funding could be used to improve airport facilities.

But, one airline has stated that itmay consider serving Visalia without the subsidy program.

Mokulele Airlines is exploring the idea of taking on the Visalia market anyway.

"We were disappointed to hear the council opted for the buyout program," said Ron Hansen, Mokulele Airlines' CEO.

"We are waiting to hear what Imperial does," he said.

Imperial County suffered the same fate as Visalia when SeaPort Airlines pulled out of California. It, too, was left

AIRPORT continued on **11 »**

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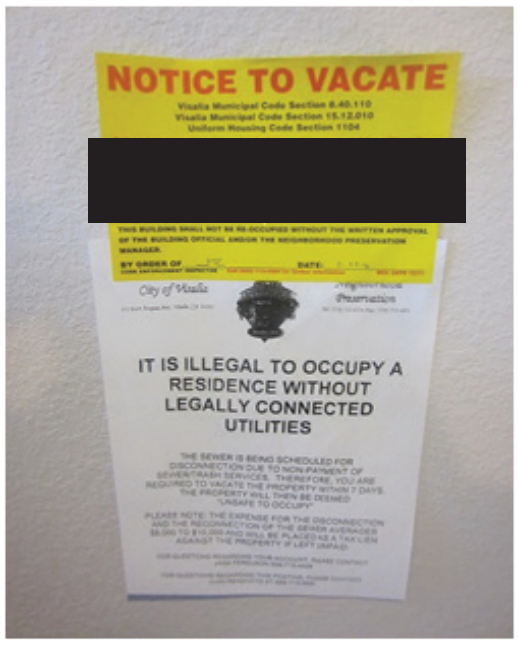
FROM THE PUBLISHER'S DESK

I Expect Better

Let me start by falling on my sword. That the City of Visalia's billing practices are Byzantine is immaterial.

Never mind that, since separating sewer and trash service from water delivery--and billing on its own, separate from Cal Water Service Company--the city's billing has been irregular. Cal Water--the actual water bill--arrives like clockwork, but the bill for sewer and trash services literally arrives in fits and starts. Sometimes I get no bill, and sometimes I receive several.

I am, therefore, out of synch with it. And not because I'm unorganized or disorganized: I'm non-organized. That is, my mind sometimes tends to be on the next thing as opposed to what's at hand. So, while I don't trust this apparently haphazard system, the buck does stop with me--long enough, at least, for me to write a check. Still, though, I remain impaled--I freely admit to my fault in all this.



"All this" is the city's recently posting a Notice to Vacate on each front doorway of three of our tenants.

This is objectionable on several levels. To begin with, I feel very protective toward our tenants, and the notion that officialdom could somehow evict them is too heavy-handed to tolerate. So I paid the outstanding balance and tore the notices down. It's up to me to do any evicting and, having recently been evicted myself, I am loathe to do so.

I have, of course, drawn the unsavory duty of evicting people--chiefly for nonpayment of rent, and typically in a residential situation. Only once have I ousted a commercial tenant, and that was because it came to be believed she was running a prostitution ring. I simply allowed her lease to lapse without renewing it. Then, instead of going month-to-month, I gave her notice. She had a Los Angeles attorney telephone me while we were taking the kid to see the Grand Canyon. By "telephone" I mean threaten. I just told him there was nothing to talk about.

But in this case we're not--contrary to the white portion of the notices--talking residences here. These are places of business. The code violations cited in yellow all pertain to dwellings.

It would not be the first time the city has been in error with me in its dealings. A year or two ago, code enforcement in its wisdom decided one tenant was in gross violation of just about everything from living in a commercially zoned property to maintaining unsanitary conditions. The city had photographs to prove its case and, when confronted with these, I was forced to acquiesce. I agreed, mildly, that it appeared people were, indeed, residing there; moreover, the place was a mess.

But it wasn't our tenant's mess, and the photographs were not of our building. The city simply ascribed one of our addresses to its evidence.

I would be fine with this, except for the fact that our tenant has not yet fully mastered English and the whole process scared the Christ out of her.

And because I pay a business tax to the City of Visalia, I expect better. I don't do business in the city--our tenants do--yet I still, regularly and for years, now, pay tax there. It would truly be hilarious if these revenues went toward code enforcement. I asked at City Hall once, and was told the money stolen from me was in support of fire and police services. This mollified me, somewhat, although--not living in Visalia--I have no vote there.

I don't know where the money goes, but if I had a say it would be to education.

I expect better from the City of Visalia.

Alas, I expect better from myself. I'll start by promptly paying the next bill.

— Joseph Oldenbourg

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Political Fix

Catherine Doe

Falling Asleep on the Job

Republican Assembly Member Devon Mathis was not a happy camper when he heard that fellow Republican Woodlake Mayor Rudy Mendoza filed to challenge him for State Assembly District 26. Mr. Mathis' response when interviewed by *The Fresno Bee* was, "resources that the Republican caucus would use to help Fresno Republican Clint Olivier in his race for Assembly will have to now be used to help him fend off Mendoza."

Why would the Republican Caucus spend money to "fend off" a fellow conservative Republican?

The Republican Caucus has one main responsibility, and that is to get Republicans elected. Why would the Republican Caucus divert money from the hotly contested race for Assembly District 31, where a Republican may win for the first time in decades, to an Assembly District 26--where a Republican win is virtually guaranteed?

The situation in Assembly District 31 is similar to what happened in 2014 in California Senate District 16. State Senator, Democrat Michael Rubio, resigned early to take a job with Chevron, leaving the 16th District to pick up the million-dollar tab to conduct a special election. The backlash led to the Democrats losing their long-held seat to Republican Andy Vidak.

Assemblyman Democrat Henry Perea just did the same thing, and resigned to take a job with the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, better known as PhRMA. Assembly District 31 is now on the hook to pay a million dollars to run a special election. Republican candidate Olivier has been elected twice as a Fresno City councilman in a district that is a majority Democratic, and he has a good chance at beating Democrat Joaquin Arambula.

The California Assembly Republican Caucus endorsed Mr. Mathis last September when Mr. Mendoza was not even considering a run. The Mathis office put out a press release at the time proudly announcing unanimous support from the Assembly Republicans. In reality, the endorsement is part of the benefits of being a member of the club. As one former staffer said, "If he hadn't managed to get the endorsement, then that should be news because I think the only way that doesn't happen for an incumbent is if they are dead."

This same mind-frame led to Mr. Mathis, only months into his first term, throwing his hat in the ring to be elected as the minority floor leader. As one of his former staff said, "how can someone think they are qualified to become the leader of the Assembly when in January they were still trying to figure out where the bathroom is?"

Another person working with the Assembly wrote, "Of course, to be leader of the caucus means that you have to have the respect of your colleagues, but doing things like falling asleep at your desk during floor session doesn't exactly paint one in a positive light (this actually happened in April.)"

Mr. Mathis, suggesting that the Republican caucus should support him financially just because he is an incumbent, puts his needs before the good of the California Republican Party. Just because someone offers you money doesn't mean it's ethical to accept it.

Not only should Mr. Mathis not assume that the caucus would disparage a fellow conservative Republican such as Mr. Mendoza, but Mr. Mathis should not accept their money.

Somehow I don't think that would happen.

Nine Candidates Run for District 1

Because there aren't enough people already running for Tulare County Supervisor District 1, the Tulare County Registrar of Voters extended the filing period five more days to March 16. As of now there are nine candidates, but one brave soul may file the last day, which would be after we go to press. My prediction is that the number of candidates will stay at nine, because as I said in an earlier column, we are in a "nine" year.

It's ironic that the nomination period was extended for District 1 with nine candidates, and the nomination period is closed for District 2 which only has one candidate. Tulare County Supervisor Pete Vander Poel, representing District 2, will be running uncontested. According to the registrar of voters, "Nomination periods are extended for offices when the incumbent does not file by the deadline. Extensions to the nomination period allow any candidate other than the incumbent to file for office." The incumbent for District 1 is Supervisor Allen Ishida, who announced last year that he had decided to run for Governor in 2018. In all the other races the incumbent filed.

The logic behind extending the nomination period when an incumbent does not file is to give potential candidates with limited name recognition and finances an opportunity to run for an open seat. In many cases it is unrealistic to try and unseat someone who has been in the public eye for years and raised thousands of dollars. It just so happens that Mr. Ishida let everyone know early that he was not going to defend his seat so the extension is not going to make much of a difference. In District 2, the extension would have made a huge difference if Mr. Vander Poel had decided not to run.

The registrar of voters' logic is correct. Tulare County Supervisor Phil Cox and Visalia City Councilmember Amy Shuklian are running for Supervisor District 3. Both have money and name recognition, making Ms. Shuklian's bid almost as good as being an incumbent.

When do incumbents lose? Well, the most recent upset was when Gov.

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Tulare County Supervisor District 1 Candidates Forum Hosted by Visalia Chamber

Catherine Doe

The Visalia Chamber of Commerce and the Building Industry Association of Tulare/Kings Counties (BIA) organized the public's first look at the nine candidates running for Tulare County Supervisor District 1. Visalia Chamber President Gail Zurek, hosted the forum and started the event by having each candidate give a two-minute introduction.

John Elliott, owner of the newspaper *Kaweah Commonwealth*, started off the introductions by saying if elected he would be the first supervisor from Three Rivers since 1891. That supervisor was James Barton and also happens to be the great-grandfather of Elliott's wife, Sarah Barton. Elliott stated that his experience as a Tulare County Planning commissioner since 2005, and the fact that because of his newspaper, he has researched and written about all the people and places in the district.

Second to speak was Kuyler Crocker. His main qualification for being supervisor is that he comes from a family of five generations of farmers. His family farms mainly citrus in the Lindsay/Strathmore area and has dealt firsthand with the water crisis. When asked about the recently passed groundwater legislation he said that if Tulare County received the amount of surface water it deserves then farmers would not be pumping and depleting the underground aquifer.

Brian Poochigian spoke next, saying that he wanted to make a promise - that he would be an honest and concerned representative to ensure that the county

Tulare County District 1 Supervisor candidates. Catherine Doe/Valley Voice

remains great for generations to come. Poochigian always believed in giving back to the community in which he was raised and emphasized that he is a fiscal conservative.

"The government should be held responsible for responsible spending," he said.

Poochigian plans on working directly with the state and federal government to get the water that farmers and residents need and plans on finding more money for public safety.

Ted Macaulay, former mayor of Exeter, said that during his time on the Exeter City Council, it passed 12 balanced city budgets, a difficult feat during the Great Recession. His day job for the last 20 years has been in the insurance business, but he also has sat on many county commissions including the Local Agency Formation Committee, Tulare County Association of Governments, and the Economic Development Corporation. Macaulay pointed out that on many of these committees he was the chair or vice-chair. He said District 1 is unique because it has the most fertile ground in the country and must be preserved and persevere through the man-made drought.

Angel Galvez, an Exeter-resident, said he is running because he loves this county. His parents were migrants from Mexico and he grew up in the Woodville Labor Camp, west of Porterville. He worked alongside his parents during grade school as a farm laborer. Galvez received a BA in criminology from Fresno State. He also has accreditations from colleges in Bogota, Columbia and Japan. He received a master's degree from Fresno Pacific University in Organizational Leadership and Development. His work skills come from working with the Tulare County Health and Human Services in the mental health branch. His work has given him experience in community planning and policy on a county and state level.

"With my work I am already improving the lives of people in Tulare County," he said.

At age of 27, Dennis Smith co-founded National Builders Supply with partner Noel Anderson, and the business is now going on its 38th year. He does not want to build the government, but wants to fight the government in terms of local control.

He said the county is facing three main issues - fire, water and air. In terms of water, the crux of the three, the federal government is controlling the surface water and now the state is trying to control the ground water. Smith says he will fight to keep local control. He also pointed out that, in the 500-page, $1 billion county budget, that $408 million comes from outside the county and mainly goes to the Health and Human Services Agency. So if the federal government wanted to cut the flow of money, half of the county's budget would be gone. Smith advocated that the county needs to become more self sufficient and fund its own local government.

Smith recommended reading the California Tax Machine that walks the reader through the California tax system. He said that when California's second constitution was written that California's main problems were immigration, crooked politicians and monopolists. Not much has changed since then and Smith said the supervisors should represent all interests, not just special interests.

Vincent Salinas' experience with government comes from his time on the Newark Planning Commission and 11 years on the Visalia Planning Commission. He also spent four years on Visalia's General Plan Update, which was just passed in 2015. He is concerned that

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Political Fix

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Bill Clinton beat incumbent George Bush Sr. in a victory that produced Hillary Clinton. On the local scene it is harder to say. Visalia City Council had two incumbents lose in 2008. But the last time an incumbent Tulare County Supervisor lost was, ironically, Lali Moheno--who lost to Supervisor Cox.

Maybe Ms. Shuklian will return the favor.

And Finally…….

The food fight between Woodlake Mayor Rudy Mendoza and Assemblyman Devon Mathis started hours after Mr. Mendoza filed to run for Assembly District 26. Lost in all their drama was fellow candidate Ruben Macareno. As Chair of the Tulare County Democratic Central Committee, he always wants to make sure that someone other than a Republican is on the ballot for a state office. He runs a serious campaign, and would like to be the district's assemblyman, but in a conservative county like this one he has been more of a placeholder for the Democratic Party.

But now Mr. Macareno is taking a second look.

With the recent revelation that Mr. Mathis' seat is vulnerable, and that the two Republicans will split the vote, it's quite possible that Mr. Macareno will make it to the general election. Just a few days ago an establishment Tulare County Republican said that Mr. Macareno and Mr. Mendoza would probably be the top two finishers in the California Primary in June.

I thought that was an extreme position to take until remembering I predicted the same exact thing two years ago. For the June 2014 primary I predicted that Rudy Mendoza would come in first and Ruben Macareno would come in second. I was wrong by a long shot. Mr. Mendoza did come in first but then Mr. Mathis came in second and went on to win the election.

In 2014, I didn't take into account that Mr. Macareno would have to split the Democrat vote with two other candidates, one of whom was the Vice Mayor of Tulare, Carlton Jones. The three Democrats combined got over 30% of the vote in 2014, which would have garnered a second place win in the primary. Mr. Macareno can count on those votes, plus the crossover Democrats who voted for Mr. Mathis in the last election. After Mr. Mathis' pandering to the Tea Party in his first year in office, I doubt any Democrats are going to cross party lines this election.

I predict a vote so close in the assembly race that the registrar's office will have to do a recount. Right now each candidate would probably win 30% of the vote. How that last 10% will vote is the big unknown.

If somehow Mr. Mendoza and Mr. Macareno manage to win the primary and go on to the November general election, then I will have four months to rewrite my January 20 column, *What Does It Take to Elect a Mexican Around Here?*

On Facebook at facebook.com/ourvalleyvoice

Central California Judge Fights Potential Removal from Office

Ronald Pierce

A California Judge recently removed from office by California's Commission on Judicial Performance, is exercising his right to appeal before the California Supreme Court.

Through his attorney, Randall Miller, Tulare County Superior Court Judge Valeriano Saucedo filed his appeal on Monday, exactly ninety (90) days after the CJP's removal order of December 1, 2015; Saucedo's last day in which to file his appeal. Both the California Supreme Court and the CJP would not provide a copy of Saucedo's petition.

According to CJP statistics, Saucedo is the eleventh judge to be removed from office in California's history. Of 10 previous removals in CJP history, only eight were appealed to the California Supreme Court. In 2003, Contra Costa Judge Bruce Van Voorhis even appealed his removal all the way to the United States Supreme Court. In all instances, those appeals were denied.

Under right of first response, the CJP's answer to Saucedo's appeal is expected sometime in mid April; Saucedo's reply to it expected in early May. Once the parties' responses are lodged, the Californian public should find out as early as July or August of this year whether Saucedo's appeal is successful. Until then, Saucedo continues to collect wages.

Subsequent to public proceedings regarding his amorous pursuit of courtroom clerk, Priscilla Tovar, involving his fabrication of an anonymous control letter to Tovar, showering her with gifts worth thousands, and providing legal advice to her son – Saucedo was found to have also falsely testified before the CJP during a week-long trial in 2015.

In its December, 2015 decision to remove Saucedo from office, the CJP focused on what it characterized as Saucedo's untruthful testimony.

"The deceitful, calculated, and unseemly nature of the judge's misconduct, compounded by his lack of candor in response to the commission's investigation and untruthful testimony under oath before the masters compels our decision to remove Judge Saucedo from office." (Decision and Order Removing Judge Valeriano Saucedo from Office, p. 2, December 1, 20151)

Judicial removal from the bench is rare, last occurring in 2012 when Judge Richard Stanford of Orange County, California was removed after it came to light he was fixing traffic tickets for family and friends, and "providing unusually lenient dispositions" for select favored. Previous to Stanton's removal, in 2008 the CJP removed Judge Kelly MacEachern, also of Orange County Superior Court, for intentionally sending a deceitful email regarding education and travel expenses, and for untruthful testimony before the Commission thereafter.

The California Supreme Court's docket reflects Case No. S232770, Saucedo v. Commission on Judicial Performance, initiated on March 1, 2016 by the filing of Saucedo's petition for review pursuant to California Rules of Court, rule 8.25(b). On March 3, 2016, the record of his removal proceedings before the CJP (2 boxes, consisting of 7 accordion folders and 8 red file folders), were formally lodged with that Supreme Court.

Contemporaneously, Valeriano Saucedo's actions from the bench are also the subject of challenge in an emerging scandal involving Tulare County Animal Control. On November 24, 2015, Fabricius joined with Wendy Jones in filing Jones et al v. Tulare County et al, Case No. 1 http://cjp.ca.gov/res/docs/removals/Saucedo_12-01-15.pdf 1:2015cv01779, a civil rights matter, in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of California.

Specifically, the complaint asserts that Valeriano Saucedo, during his threats of suicide to Tovar, issued a void order resulting in the taking and destruction of close to thirty ranch dogs belonging to Tulare County resident, William Fabricius of Ducor. Fabricius has joined with Wendy and Brian Jones of Tulare County, who separately claim that TCAC stole and then lost their family dog "Clyde".

Jones et al comes just after Valeriano Saucedo's former court clerk, Priscillar Tovar, herself filed a civil rights case against Saucedo in that same federal court; Tovar v. Valeriano Saucedo, Case No. 1:2015at00425, lodged in May of 2015.

Should his appeal fail, Saucedo will become the first judge ever removed from office in Tulare County Superior Court. Previous to Saucedo, Tulare County judges previously admonished by the CJP have been Judges Stephen Drew in 1996, and Howard Broadman in 1998. Broadman was further censured the following year.

Forum

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Tulare County pulled out of the Economic Development Corporation. Salinas would want to add to the county staff that replaced this organization. Economic development brings jobs to the county and city. He said that the way the property tax system is set up between the county and cities that the two should be working better together.

By the time the introductions were finished there was only time for three questions. Zurek asked about regulating well permits in a shrinking underground aquifer and about economic development. Then Mike Lane, BIA executive officer asked candidates their opinions on the development of Yokohl Valley.

All of the candidates declared that they were pro growth and wanted to create jobs but most were concerned about water when it came to the Yokohl Valley Development. The development has been on the drawing board for years and is east of Exeter in the foothills off of Highway 198. Elliot said that the Yokohl Valley development first burst on the scene in 2006, when people were still debating the reality of climate change.

Macaulay said that the bottom line is water. He said that J. G. Boswell Co., the developer, has the water rights but questioned if that water still exists since the drought. Right now there were too many questions concerning a new town with 50,000 people when the surrounding cities such as Woodlake only has 8,000 people and Lindsay and Exeter only have 10,000 respectively.

Candidate Roseana Sanchez sent in her RSVP but did not show up.

Mendoza

Continued from p. 1

of Tulare and Inyo Counties and part of Kern County.

"As the filing date got closer," Mendoza said, "people were calling me and saying that Mathis is an embarrassment and encouraged me to run." Mendoza's statement echoes the sentiments of local Republicans who have reported to the *Valley Voice* that Mathis has shown weak leadership in the assembly.

Mayor Mendoza submitted this statement to the *Valley Voice* the day he filed:

"Mr. Mathis does not represent the values of our district, the strongest Republican district in the Central Valley where we fight tooth and nail every day against government bureaucracy and bad regulations. I have been in touch with many people over the last couple of weeks that quite frankly, are embarrassed with his performance. Just last week, Mr. Mathis voted for a major tax increase that will hurt the working class families of our district. He has become the best friend of Governor Jerry Brown by helping to pass yet another tax that will do nothing but create additional hardship on our citizens. For the last fifteen months I have watched our assemblyman fumble around the issues with his fortune cookie wisdom and bumper sticker rhetoric. I believe the voters deserve a true conservative voice in Sacramento that will work towards solutions - not one that creates more problems. I am a small business owner with two decades of experience working in agriculture. I have worked the issues in business and as Mayor of Woodlake, I have worked tirelessly to reenergize a city into a vibrant economy without raising taxes. I am a Republican with a long history of conservative values, I will be proud to serve with honesty and integrity."

The tipping point for Mendoza to file was when Mathis voted for a health care tax that State Senators Jean Fuller and Andy Vidak, and Assemblyman Jim Patterson all voted against. Mathis was recently on a radio talk show discussing the issue, when he said he went to college so he understands how to read bills.

Mendoza's response was "if Mathis is so smart then he should know it is a tax."

Though many of the same people support Mendoza's candidacy who did in the 2014 election, he said he isn't concerned with endorsements right now.

"I have a list of 150 hardworking ordinary people, who do not hold political office and want me to run. I'm going to walk the districts and have direct contact with the voters by talking to them every day," he said.

One of those hard-working locals is Val Guzman, owner of R&N Enterprises. Guzman said he saw Mendoza grow up and is impressed how he frequently goes to Sacramento and Washington, and brings his knowledge back to Woodlake. Guzman said that Mendoza is a voracious reader and, though he attended Porterville College, he is mostly self taught. Mendoza was instrumental in getting R&N Enterprises in compliance with government regulations.

"He has a bright future and we have a bright future with him as our assemblyman," Guzman said.

Mendoza says that his knowledge comes from his many years of experience in business and his personal story.

"My life has given me a lot of wisdom," he said.

Mimi Rogers, who got to know Mendoza during his last campaign, has just signed on as his new campaign manager.

"It was kind of sudden, but I've known him for years and I believe in him," Rogers said. "Rudy has the best interests of the district in mind and is a very compassionate, hard-working individual. He has a lot of compassion for people and passion for his community."

Mendoza also plans on keeping his campaign activities grassroots and his fundraisers local, which is a direct contrast to Mathis' current strategy.

"His financial support is from Political Action Committees (PACs) and he doesn't surround himself with people from the district, but with Sacramento lobbyist and political hacks. Whoever comes into his life he bleeds him dry," Mendoza said.

Mendoza's is referring to Mathis' relatively new staff and his campaign finance report filed at the end of December, 2015. Out of the $176,000 raised by *Mathis for Assembly 2016,* much has come from Indian Casinos or big city PACs. More than $100,000 has come from outside the 26th District and a good portion of that sum came from out of state.

Just as concerning is the question of where Mathis' campaign money goes. One third of Mathis' donations goes to Willow Grace Productions, a consulting firm in Oak Grove just outside of Sacramento. Willow Grace Productions is owned by Judith Dougherty, the wife of Mathis' chief of staff, Sean Dougherty. The campaign finance report does not itemize how the $57,000 was spent, just that it went to Dougherty's firm.

Mendoza ended by saying that, "This is not about ego or revenge. It's about doing an honest job for the people of this district and doing that job with integrity."

Agriculture

Lower Fuel Prices Help Farmers Cope With Other Costs

Ching Lee, CFBF

Proposed changes to California agricultural water quality regulations could prove counterproductive, according to speakers who discussed the proposal with the state Board of Food and Agriculture.

The board heard presentations on the topic last week, in the wake of changes proposed by the State Water Resources Control Board affecting the East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition's general waste discharge requirements. Experts say the action could have significant statewide impacts on the coalition approach now used to improve water quality under the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program.

Danny Merkley, water resources director for the California Farm Bureau Federation, told the board considerable progress has been made under the current program.

"Revising the East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition program would direct other regional water boards to update their programs to be consistent with the proposed order," he said. "That would have a statewide impact on irrigated agriculture."

Of particular concern is a proposed requirement that the watershed coalition submit grower-specific, field-by-field data on nitrogen use, farm evaluation data, and Irrigation and Nitrogen Management Plans to the Central Valley regional water board, Merkley said. A state Nitrogen Task Force has recommended only an aggregation of the data be submitted.

"We don't believe submitting more data from individual farmers will accomplish anything positive," Merkley said.

The proposed order also calls for:

- Requiring all growers enrolled in the coalition to participate in outreach events, update their farm evaluations annually, have certified Nitrogen Management Plans and submit NMP summary reports to the coalition. To date, this has only been required for growers in high vulnerability areas.
- Adding information identifying methods of irrigation—for example, surface, sprinkler and drip—as part of the NMP and renaming it the Irrigation and Nitrogen Management Plan. The proposed order would continue to require reporting of the amount of nitrogen applied and removed on a field-by-field basis, but would revise the specific types of measurements that would be reported.
- Requiring each farm to monitor its drinking water wells.
- Requiring the coalition to submit individual grower crop yield data to the Central Valley regional water board.

Parry Klassen, executive director of the East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition, told the board the water quality program has demonstrated "tremendous success." He said the coalition, founded in 2004, covers about 700,000 irrigated acres, and that incidents of runoff into waterways are very rare.

"That shows growers are willing to change practices and adjust their activities based on reliable information," Klassen said.

Sutter County farmer Chris Capaul puts diesel in a newer tractor that he bought when fuel prices were higher. Despite lower prices for diesel this year, Capaul says he continues to try to run his farm as efficiently as possible, to save money because of higher production costs elsewhere and reduced crop prices.
Photo/Ching Lee/CFBF

Since 2012, the coalition has been developing a nitrogen management template with other agricultural coalitions, intended to improve nutrient management further. He said the coalition sent the template to members in high-vulnerability areas and last week had requested those growers to submit their annual nitrogen-use reports.

"We will compile the information on a township basis to summarize crops, harvested amounts and calculate the nitrogen removed," he said. "I can't emphasize enough how difficult collecting, calculating and summarizing that much data will be for all irrigated lands."

Presenters told the board they're concerned the state water board will not be able to accumulate, interpret and inform grower decisions on such a large amount of technical data.

Abby Taylor-Silva of the Grower-Shipper Association of Central California, which represents 350 member companies on the Central Coast, said the proposed changes to the irrigated-lands program don't credit farmers for things they're already doing. For example, she cited building stormwater, sediment and retention basins to control and capture field runoff, as well as diverting runoff to land planted to cover crops.

"There are solutions being explored and experiments being conducted that can inform agriculture as a whole," she said. "I'm afraid growers will lose incentive to continue this work because of the cost of research, the amount of data they may be requested to generate and privacy concerns."

The newly proposed revisions to the ILRP came in response to petitions from fishery and environmental-justice groups. Representatives of environmental groups told the board they are particularly interested in obtaining grower-specific information.

The state water board has announced a public comment period on the proposed changes through the latter half of May; a public workshop is tentatively set for early May in Sacramento to take oral comments on the proposed order. Merkley said CFBF would attend the workshop as well as provide written comment.

Additional information can be found at www.swrcb.ca.gov/public_notices/petitions/water_quality/a2239_sanjoaquin_ag.shtml.

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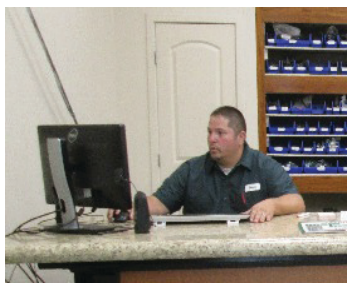

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California Citrus Mutual Forms New Association to Provide Guidance on Labor Laws

California Citrus Mutual recently announced at the 2016 Citrus Showcase the formation of a new association, the California Agricultural Labor Association (CALA). The announcement was made during a workshop at the Showcase about two major developments in labor compensation laws for employees paid a piece rate.

"Piece-rate compensation and joint liability are only two labor obstacles that the agricultural industry is struggling to understand and implement," says CCM President Joel Nelsen. "Regulatory compliance is constantly evolving and the challenge of maintaining compliance with both state and federal regulations is difficult and taxing. To meet this challenge, the citrus industry formed CALA, which will serve farm labor contractors, growers, and packinghouses alike."

Agriculture

Citrus Growers Describe Living With Tree Disease

Cecilia Parsons, CFBF

In 2005, Florida citrus production was humming along, and growers were sending the vast majority of the nation's juice oranges and grapefruit to market. The Asian citrus psyllid had been present in groves since 1998, but growers looked at it as an insect of no economic importance.

Then, citrus trees started to die, after first beginning to produce oddly colored, green, misshapen fruit and losing foliage. Florida growers knew then the citrus greening disease known as huanglongbing had invaded, and the psyllids were spreading it statewide.

Citrus growers from Florida and Texas—who are living with the consequences of an uncontrolled, invasive pest—recounted their experiences to nearly 700 growers and packers attending the annual California Citrus Mutual Citrus Expo in Visalia.

Larry Black, general manager of Peace River Packing in Lakeland, Fla., said growers there now struggle with much lower yields plus fruit lacking in solids, size and flavor.

"I was handling a million boxes a year. Now we are at half that. It is devastating for growers and they can't do enough—even spraying 12 times a year," Black said.

Dale Murden, president of Texas Citrus Mutual, told growers his state is now in the fifth year after the first positive HLB find. The latency of the disease is hard to understand, he said, but Texas growers are learning from their counterparts in Florida.

"Don't let your guard down with ACP," Murden warned growers, referring to the psyllid. "Texas at five to six years after that first find is at a scary crossroad."

In order to keep citrus production viable, Murden said Texas asks growers to communicate about psyllid control in citrus, form management areas and adopt zero tolerance for psyllid populations. They have been able to achieve about 90 percent compliance with their control protocols, he said.

"Make ACP your No. 1 target," he advised.

In Florida and Texas—and now California—abandoned or unfarmed citrus groves pose a problem for psyllid control. Murden said in areas of larger citrus plantings in Texas, removal of infected trees has been aggressive.

Black said one problem in Florida is that not all growers are on board with an aggressive treatment program to suppress the psyllid. Large growers in the southern part of the state work together and do aerial sprays, but those with smaller acreages are not as vigilant.

Urban detection and removal of infected trees is another tough situation in Florida. Ric Freeman, who farms citrus in Winter Garden, said an earlier citrus canker outbreak led to removal of infected trees and when the HLB infections began to spread, there was "no appetite" on the state level for enforcement.

Freeman told California growers he believed they could stall HLB spread to citrus-growing areas for another 10 years with aggressive spray programs.

"Do the right job, work with your neighbors," he advised.

Citrus growers and the U.S. Department of Agriculture have funded millions of dollars of research into the bacterial disease and the psyllid. At the Visalia event, researchers spoke to growers about their current projects, what they hope to accomplish and what growers can to do suppress the psyllid in California.

The pest has been trapped in most citrus-growing areas of the state, but no HLB-infected trees have been found outside of urban Southern California; a 12th infected tree was recently identified in La Puente.

Infected trees are sources of the pathogen that can be spread to other citrus trees by psyllids feeding on new growth; see related story. Infected trees may not show symptoms for two years. It is believed that early detection of HLB and removal of infected trees can slow progression of the disease throughout an orchard.

Wenbo Ma, a plant pathologist at the University of California, Riverside, was awarded a $4 million, five-year USDA grant to pursue work on early detection of HLB in citrus. She is working on development of antibody-based HLB detection methods to find the disease in its early stages.

Currently, there is little understanding of systemic analysis, Ma said. Another challenge is the inability to grow the bacteria in a laboratory. She said one goal of her research is to learn how the bacteria affect different varieties of citrus.

USDA research horticulturist Ed Stover said he is optimistic about future citrus production in Florida, in spite of the massive losses due to HLB.

Estimating that nearly 90 percent of commercially grown Florida citrus trees are infected, Stover said there is no evidence that infected trees can be cured with existing technologies. Research investment by the federal government plus grower-funded research will generate options for future plantings with HLB-resistant or -tolerant trees, he said. "Replacement" citrus varieties or transgenics may be essential to the HLB solution, Stover added.

He pointed out that nearly all sweet orange varieties come from a hybrid citrus that originated in China more than 1,000 years ago. Since 2010, he said, researchers in Florida have been scouting multiple-variety citrus groves, looking for trees that appear to be resistant or tolerant to HLB infection.

Stover said the Florida citrus-breeding program is looking at a broad selection of parent material, and the 2,000 new hybrids produced each year are from crosses intended to achieve HLB tolerance or resistance. A viable alternative to crossbreeding for resistance/tolerance, Stover said, is transgenics.

"This appears to be the most promising solution for strong HLB resistance or perhaps immunity," he said, noting work done at Texas A&M with transgenic red grapefruit and sweet orange.

(Cecilia Parsons is a reporter in Ducor. She may be contacted at ceciliaparsons8@gmail.com.)

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Commentary: It's Time For New Thinking on Water Management

Justin Fredrickson, CFBF

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COMMENTARY continued on **9 »**

Agriculture

Loss of Water During Storms Causes Frustration

Kate Campbell, CFBF

Steady rains during the past week have restored California reservoirs to storage levels not seen in nearly four years, but swollen river flows into the Pacific Ocean renewed concerns from water users and elected officials about lost opportunities as billions of gallons of fresh water headed out to sea.

By Monday night, Sacramento River flows were expected to exceed 100,000 cubic feet per second—equal to dumping about 750,000 gallons of water per second into San Francisco Bay.

Though encouraged by storage increases in Northern California reservoirs, water experts noted that very little water was being transferred from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta into storage south of the delta for use during the summer and fall. They cited federal agency interpretations of Endangered Species Act restrictions to protect delta smelt as the cause.

San Luis Reservoir in western Merced County, on which south-of-delta farmers rely for summer irrigation, is beginning to accept Central Valley Project water, but it's a trickle. Operational levels have remained well below full, allowable pump capacity in the face of last week's deluge.

Because of a dry February, the Westlands Water District said it expects its south-of-delta agricultural water contractors to receive a zero CVP water allocation. Very little 2016-17 CVP water had been stored in San Luis by March 1, or since. San Luis Reservoir is jointly operated by the state and federal water projects. Westlands said almost all of the water on the federal project side is water that was saved or purchased in previous years by individual water users.

Farmers, agricultural groups, water managers and politicians keeping watch on the water situation say they don't understand why more water isn't being transferred from the delta during such high inflows and moved into storage for later use.

"Despite flood control efforts underway at places like the Fremont Weir on the Sacramento River or flood releases at Folsom Dam, federal fishery managers have been unwilling to permit additional supplies to be moved into storage for San Joaquin Valley and Southern California water users," California Farm Water Coalition Executive Director Mike Wade said.

California Farm Bureau Federation President Paul Wenger said, "My question in this situation is: When is enough enough? During the past four years of drought, we were called on to help provide flows for the fish. Now, we have huge flows and it's still not enough for the fish. The environmental and fisheries communities have to figure out at what point there's enough water to support fisheries, and the excess needs to go to storage."

The biological opinion developed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, required by the ESA, states that in some cases decisions about fishery needs are determined based on "biological intuition" that fish are being harmed, he noted.

"Farmers and ranchers, urban residents, businesses, are all accountable for their water use, but environmental water use is not questioned," he said. "We all want to protect the environment, but if we find those protections aren't working, we need to rethink our strategies."

Between Jan. 1 and March 6 last year, 1.3 million acre-feet of water flowed through the delta and 651,000 acre-feet were transferred to storage. During the same period in 2016, 2.8 million acre-feet of water flowed through the delta, but only 627,000 acre-feet were moved to storage.

Water spilling from Nimbus Dam on the American River makes space for capturing more runoff and flood control. Behind the dam on Monday, Folsom Lake was at 116 percent of historical average. Shasta Reservoir, the state's largest water storage facility, was at 103 percent of average.
Photo/Jim Morris, California Rice Commission

"It's inexcusable that pumping levels have been reduced without sufficient evidence of fish mortality, even while biological opinions would allow more pumping," Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., said in a statement released last week.

Rather than pumping as much water as possible under the biological opinions, Feinstein said, pumping levels were ratcheted down for an entire month between mid-January and mid-February.

"In some instances, these decisions were made even though available data suggested no smelt or salmon were anywhere near the pumps," she said.

Stressing that there are "real-world consequences" to "intuitive" decision-making taking place in the delta, Feinstein said she had met recently with a young farmer from Firebaugh who said both he and his father had lost their farms because of water shortages, and that the farms had employed 450 workers who harvested 4,800 acres of cantaloupes and honeydew melons.

"Basing pumping decisions on better science and real-time monitoring is the least we can do," she said.

Western Growers President and CEO Tom Nassif said his organization agrees that the situation requires both immediate administrative action as well as legislation to allow greater levels of pumping—within the confines of the biological opinions—when storm conditions are present.

"But Sen. Feinstein should not be the only leader of her party to make this common-sense plea," Nassif said. "We urge Sen. Boxer and Gov. Brown to join Sen. Feinstein in calling for the federal agencies to act now, within their discretion, to capture and store as much storm runoff as possible before it's gone."

CFBF President Wenger said agencies need to be held accountable for water supply decisions that affect millions of people and could cost the California economy billions of dollars.

"We can understand curtailments during a drought emergency, and farmers are willing to do their part, but not moving water to storage is inexplicable during times of high flows like this," Wenger said.

(Kate Campbell is an assistant editor of Ag Alert. She may be contacted at kcampbell@cfbf.com.)

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Speakers Criticize Possible Changes in Water Rules

Kate Campbell, CFBF

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The board heard presentations on the topic last week, in the wake of changes proposed by the State Water Resources Control Board affecting the East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition's general waste discharge requirements. Experts say the action could have significant statewide impacts on the coalition approach now used to improve water quality under the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program.

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Of particular concern is a proposed requirement that the watershed coalition submit grower-specific, field-by-field data on nitrogen use, farm evaluation data, and Irrigation and Nitrogen Management Plans to the Central Valley regional water board, Merkley said. A state Nitrogen Task Force has recommended only an aggregation of the data be submitted.

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SPEAKERS continued on **9 »**

Commentary

Continued from p. 7

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Speakers

Continued from p. 8

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Timothy Fosnaugh was promoted to the rank of Captain. Courtesy/TCSO

Fosnaugh Promoted to Captain

Sheriff Mike Boudreaux promoted Timothy Fosnaugh to the rank of Captain. He will be responsible for the Detentions Division.

"I'm very excited and very humbled," he said.

In his 30 years with the Sheriff's Office, he's served on a variety of assignments from detentions to the Orosi Substation, K9, Ag Crimes, and Property Crimes.

"Every one of them has prepared me for today," he said.

Fosnaugh graduated from Fresno City College Police Academy in 1984. In 1985, he was hired at the Sheriff's Office and his first assignment was at the County Correctional Center.

In 1987, he was on the team that opened the Sequoia Field Detention Facility, later renamed the Bob Wiley Detention Facility.

In 1994, he transferred to the Orosi Substation, where he was a Field Training Officer and a K-9 handler for 5 years.

He was transferred to the Ag Crimes Unit as a Detective in 2000. In 2002, he was promoted to Sergeant and transferred back to the Bob Wiley Detention Facility. He was the Internal Affairs Sergeant in 2003 and, in 2004, he transferred to the Orosi Substation as the Patrol Sergeant, where he served as the Sergeant in charge of TCSO's K-9 Unit. In 2006, he became the North End Property Detective Sergeant.

In 2007, he was promoted to Lieutenant and assigned to the Bob Wiley Detention Facility. In 2009, he took over responsibilities for the Adult PreTrial Facility as well. He transferred to the Men's Correctional Facility in 2013.

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Hospital

Continued from p. 1

meetings. It gives them sole right to select or remove medical staff officers.

"They make all the decisions for themselves by vote," Harwell said. "The law is designed to have this separation of powers so you don't have people who are economically tied to the hospital be the first line of defense in protection of patient care. That's why self-governance is so important."

The California Medical Association (CMA), in a letter dated January 29, said the TLHCD Board's unilateral firing of TRMC's staff is clearly illegal and violates several of those protective laws. The CMA has joined TRMCS in its lawsuit against the District. Also objecting is the Tulare County Medical Association.

Hospital Board Met Illegally

The alleged extralegal action by the TLHCD's board took place at a meeting held in late January that was attended by TRMC's former chief of staff, Dr. Abraham Betre.

"Every month we (TRMCS) have a meeting and decide what I'm going to present to the board," he said. "On January 26, there was a board meeting. I attended as chief of staff. At that point they told me nothing about the plan to terminate the previous medical staff. The next day, I got emails from staff and Sherrie Bell (chair of the TLHCD Board) telling me we have a new staff."

The TLHCD has admitted it violated the state's open meeting act with that action, and it held a second meeting on February 15, repeating the firings in an attempt to validate its previous action.

Restraining Order Issued

Attorneys for both parties appeared in court in mid-February, and a temporary restraining order was issued to prevent any further actions by the Board that might harm TRMC's former medical staff. Because of late filings by lawyers for the District, a continuance in the case to March 17 was granted by Judge David Mathias, leading District counsel to puzzlingly declare a minor victory to local media.

In its filings, attorneys for the hospital said the board took the unilateral action to remove and replace the medical staff because it feared losing the ability to treat Medicare and Medicaid patients in the wake of a survey by the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) that found it did not meet several standards. In a statement filed with the court on behalf of the board, Benzeevi said he was told by a CMS surveyor TRMC could be shut down if it did not act "immediately to remedy the former (medical staff's) many lapses in responsibility."

Ironically, the work of Benzeevi, who is an emergency room physician, had been investigated by the TRMCS for poor quality of patient care.

Violations Widespread at Hospital

In its objections to Benzeevi's sworn statements given via affidavit, as well as statements by Board Member Dr. Parmod Kumar, Bell, HCCA CFO/COO Alan Germany and ER physician Ronald Ostrum, attorneys for the medical staff say the hospital is only telling a small part of the story, and that the testimony is riddled with hearsay, inexpert opinions and baseless statements. The CMS report found violations throughout TRMC, some of them years old and affecting the facilities most critical functions.

"The reason they (CMS) were going to close the hospital was because the hospital's fire and alarm suppression system had not been operational since October 2013," Harwell said. "That's not a good thing, and it's not the doctors' fault."

Even more concerning, the CMS found TRMC does not have a functioning infection-control program in place. The person made responsible for that critical task is not qualified to do the job, Harwell said.

"The woman in charge had no idea what she was doing and had no idea how she got that job," he said.

According to Harwell, the CMS report described TRMC's kitchen as "filthy," and its Quality Assessment Improvement Program (QAIP) was practically nonexistent.

"(The QAIP is) the way the medical staff has to look at the quality of medical care. The hospital stopped doing that sometime in 2014, and that's also not the doctors' fault," Harwell said. "What the hospital has been telling the courts and the media isn't the truth."

In fact, the board's actions, Harwell said, have done nothing but worsen the situation.

"There are lots of problems in this hospital we'd like to help fix, but they've taken away our ability to do that," he said. "I don't get this war. People on my side don't seem to want this."

Board Member, Doctors Under Investigation

The timing of the medical staff firing is highly suspicious.

Kumar, a gastroenterologist and member of the TLHCD Board, was ordered to take classes in anger management and medical record keeping by the TRMCS in order to maintain his right to practice at the hospital. The training was to be performed by January 29; the firing came just three days before Kumar's deadline to complete that training or lose his hospital privileges. Kumar is now an officer on the replacement medical staff.

He did not respond to a request for an interview.

"This was nothing more than a transparent attempt by the District to protect one of its own from legitimate medical practice privilege review and discipline, and to retaliate against the Medical Staff," a document filed by plaintiffs in the pending case states. Besides Benzeevi and Kumar, the TRMCS had also investigated the practice of Dr. Rebecca Zulim, who now serves as TRMC's chief of surgery, for unsafe patient care.

Benzeevi also did not respond to repeated requests for an interview; Chairwoman Bell also failed to respond.

Medical Staff Office in Chaos

Problems with maintaining the medical staff's training records have been ongoing for years, ousted chief of staff Betre said, and chaos in that office kept the District from retaining qualified individuals it hired to run it.

"Staff came and left. They were very, very qualified people, but as soon as they saw the medical staff director, they didn't want to tarnish their reputation," Betre said. "For the last year, they put a person who had no experience running medical staff or medical training in that office. She didn't know what to do. In open session, I said they were jeopardizing the quality of health care for patients. I was frustrated, and I wanted people to hear what I was saying."

The board's choice of medical staff director is lowering TRMC's ability to provide quality care, Harwell said.

"The person who's running the medical staff now was recently a teller in a bank," he said. "She might have been the best bank teller on Earth, but that doesn't qualify her. It's a rule-ridden, Byzantine process that takes years of experience."

Terrorist Threats and Lawsuits

In another bizarre twist, attorneys for the District allege that Dr. Anil Patel, who was TRMC's chief of staff and chair of the Medical Executive Committee (MEC) at the time, threatened the life of Bell during a meeting in 2014. According to Harwell, no witnesses could be found who were willing to substantiate that claim. The MEC and Patel subsequently sued Bell for defamation, alleging she called the staff terrorists and said they should "all be hanged."

In a counter suit, Bell and the District said Patel had threatened to drag Bell outside by the hair and beat her head against the ground, and repeatedly claimed he would "kick her ass." Patel is both vegetarian and pacifist, and Harwell said the allegations do not reflect Patel's personality.

That is not the only example of TLHCD's trouble with the law. In 2009, the TLHCD paid a $2.5 million settlement to the Department of Justice (DoJ)and signed a corporate integrity agreement following an investigation into allegedly illegal physician contracts.

Then, in 2013, TLHCD was back under DoJ's scrutiny when former board member Roger McPhetridge alleged that Kumar was regularly seeing as many as 64 patients during four-hour shifts at the hospital's Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC). FQHC standards only allow a doctor to treat four patients per hour. According to reporting by the *Financial Times of London*, the DoJ investigation found Kumar may have pocketed $800,000 from 2010 to 2012 while working under an illegal contract.

Kumar and his wife, Dr. Parul Gupta, who was also employed at TLHCD's FQHC, resigned from those positions during the course of the DoJ's investigation into their action.

Democracy Subverted

What Betre finds most disturbing about the situation is how the MEC's right to govern itself was stripped away by fiat. Had staff wanted him gone, they could have easily removed him, he said.

"If you want to do it, you have to do it properly," he said. "You can't select a group of people you like and dismiss the ones you don't. You don't have self-governance if you do that."

What TLHCD's Board is attempting is a coup d'etat, he said.

"If I'm not representing the medical staff the way they want, they can recall me," Betre said. "It is the same democratic process you use to remove the president, the mayor. You cannot just declare on your own you are the boss of everybody. The patient quality will go down if we do not have the right to say to the board this is how it has to be done."

Nasty Rumors Not True

Also in the statements filed with the court on behalf of TLHCD are allegations members of the TRMCS were not providing enough patients to the hospital and were referring them to other facilities. This, according to the filings, was intended to harm the hospital.

However, requiring physicians to refer their patients to specific facilities is prohibited under state and federal law to avoid conflict of interest.

"I think people need to know the rumors they're spreading that certain physicians are harming the hospital by sending (patients) elsewhere, that's not true," Betre said. "Also, they need to know it's illegal for a physician to send a patient to a particular hospital. I cannot say to a patient, for instance, you can only go to Tulare Regional Medical Center. The assertion certain physicians are trying to harm the hospital is ridiculous."

Harwell said such behavior by his clients would be counterproductive.

"We're not going to say anything bad about this hospital," he said. "It's important to my doctors it be successful. This is the great tragedy of this war."

Airport

Continued from p. 1

without an air carrier.

The three airlines that bid for Visalia's service – Mokulele, Boutique Air and Great Lakes Airlines – also bid for Imperial's service. There, the cities of Imperial and El Centro voted to endorse Mokulele's bid, while that county's Board of Supervisors voted in favor of Boutique Airlines.

The DOThad not awarded service to either airline as of press time.

If Mokulele is awarded Imperial's service, it would be flying between the Imperial/El Centro Airport and Los Angeles. At that point, adding flights between Los Angeles and Visalia may be feasible.

"We believe Visalia is a good market and could be very successful," Hansen said.

During the Visalia's recent council meeting, the city's Airport Advisory Committee recommended the city enter into the CFPP buyout program instead of selecting another carrier after serious concerns regarding EAS program restrictions.

Visalia will be the first airport in the country to take advantage of the CFPP option, which has been available since 2004.

Visalia is applying for $3.7 million, which CFPP may provide the city in exchange for sitting out of the EAS program for 10 years. If approved, funding under the program could be used to enhance the airport such as building new hangars and other facilities which could attract cargo and private operations.

SeaPort Airlines served the airport since February 2015, but ceased service overnight on January 15, citing the nationwide pilot shortage affecting regional airlines across the nation.

Prior carrier Great Lakes Airlines had served Visalia from 2008 to 2015, but saw its reliability falter due to the same pilot shortage.

Any carrier that would operate out of Visalia, through the subsidy program, would need to have an effective per-passenger subsidy of under $200 per person. If it went above that limit, Visalia would lose its subsidy anyway – and it would no longer be eligible for the program.

SeaPort Airlines, Visalia Airport Manager Mario Cifuentez said, had managed to hit nearly 10,000 passengers during its time at Visalia. But somewhere between 30-40% of those passengers were simply flying from Burbank to Sacramento, or vice-versa, using Visalia as a stopping point, he said.

While SeaPort was successful in raising passenger counts, the subcommittee stated in its report to council that it was incredibly unlikely any of the three carriers that bid for service would meet that subsidy cap. Cifuentez echoed these concerns to the council.

The program does not mean that passenger service at the airport would be forced to end – airlines would simply be forced to operate at Visalia without a subsidy, Cifuentez said.

Councilmembers said that while it was unfortunate that the community could lose service, they looked forward to the possibility of attracting companies to the city by upgrading the airport's facilities.

"This is a good opportunity to market the airport differently," Councilman Greg Collins said.

The lack of reliability of the airlines serving Visalia has "been a problem" for the last 16 years, Councilmember Bob Link said.

"It could also help the Industrial Park," Link said. "I support it 110%."

"I'm totally supportive," said Mayor Steve Nelsen.

"We've been burned [by air carriers] twice," said Nelsen, referring to service from SeaPort Airlines and Great Lakes Airlines.

"This is a chance to rebrand it [the airport]," Nelsen said.

Through monthly lease and landing fees, the airport has generally been receiving $40,000 annually in revenue from airlines serving Visalia, Cifuentez said in an interview. That's $400,000 in 10 years versus $3.7 million, he said. He added that he did not know whether the city would receive one lump sum or would be reimbursed project by project.

Cifunetez was to meet with DOT representatives and file for the buyout program funds.

"It's a viable program," he said, "but no one has done it before."

Marymount Mulls Visalia

Catherine Doe

A group of Visalia leaders and representatives from Marymount California University metearlier in March to discuss opening a four-year college in Visalia. Councilmembers Warren Gubler, Bob Link, Mayor Steve Nelsen and Visalia City Manager Mike Olmos met with Marymount's co-presidents Sandy Escobeo and James Reeves. Also at the meeting were Tulare County Supervisors Phil Cox and Pete Vander Poel.

Mayor Nelsen gave the representatives of Marymount a warm welcome and all of the Visalia leaders expressed their desire to have Marymount locate in Visalia.

Escobeo and Reeves had spent the day priorexploring Visalia's downtown, enjoying the city's restaurants and shops. According to Robert Aguilar, a retired Delano school superintendent who is spearheading local efforts to help Marymount, both representatives like Visalia and are favorable to the idea of locating the third branch of Marymount California University here.

Marymount California University is a Catholic institution of higher learning that challenges students of all backgrounds and ages to pursue lives of leadership and service. The college's main campus is in Rancho Palos Verdes and a smaller branch is in Lucerne in Lake County. Marymount had been a two-year college for 10 years and just got its four-year accreditation last October.

Aguilar said that a group of concerned Visalians donated $25,000 to pay for a feasibility study to determine if Marymount would be a good fit for Visalia. The City of Visalia invested $5,000.Marymount would offer bachelor's degree programs,which local boosters say could evolve into the first traditional four-year college in the city's history.

Two of the factors the college would be looking at are the local need for a four-year college, and how easy the transition would be for students from College of the Sequoias to a four-year college. They are also interested in meeting with Porterville College and Reedley Community College representatives for the same reasons. The research will include interviews with the residents on their feelings toward a four-year college and private meetings with those involved in education in Tulare County.

Marymount California University specializes in degrees in criminal justice, and business management and leadership.

Aguilar pointed out that there is no four-year college between Fresno and Bakersfield. If Marymount did locate to Visalia it would serve the needs of Tulare, Kings and part of Fresno Counties. The survey is expected to be done by May and the results presented to Marymount's board for approval in the summer.

Drone

Continued from p. 1

situational analysis for first responders to include search and rescue missions, fleeing suspects, forensic photography of crime scenes, natural or man-made disaster documentation, and any other observation duties where placing an officer into the immediate location would endanger his or her health and safety.

Boudreaux did want to make clear that the drone cannot fly over people's homes or pools. He said that the only time the drone can fly over someone's home is through a court order or a warrant permitting it's use.

"It's a beautiful piece of equipment," said Boudreaux. He added that the advantage of this model is that the department can add equipment in the future such as infra-red photography.

The TCSD becomes only the third department in the state to use this technology behind Alameda and Ventura Counties.

"I promised that we would be moving our agency into the future with advanced technology," said Boudreaux.

Sales Tax

Continued from p. 1

City council had asked staff to make recommendations on how to move forward with this. The city hopes that through explanation of the potential tax and the undertaking of a survey to confirm voter support, it can determine whether to proceed by placing of the measure by the July deadline for the November ballot.

Funds from the proposed tax would be used for police, fire, streets and parks maintenance. It would increase the number of police officers on the streets and increase gang-prevention programs, as well as maintain fire response time. Increased funds would also aide in maintenance and cleanliness of parks.

The ½ cent tax would potentially add $10.8 million in funds annually. It is estimated that 40% of that would be spent by visitors to the city, according to staff reports.

It was made clear by Frost that accountability of funds was a vital part of the proposal.

"It's important that we protect our investments," said Councilman Greg Collins. "It is good stewardship that we have the funds to maintain them."

Councilman Bob Link reviewed the facts that Measure T funds have provided two new fire stations, two more police stations and added more police force on the streets, and added that it is important to maintain the improvements.

"I am very comfortable about going forward with this," he said.

Vice Mayor Warren Gubler said he felt that if the sales tax initiative is passed, that it be revisited in the future, perhaps in six years.

"I am fine with allowing the public in on it," he added.

Mayor Steve Nelsen said, "sales tax has flat-lined in the past couple of years."

He agreed that the city needs the boost.

"A sales tax measure would be spread out among everyone," he said.

Visalia city staff will now move forward with developing informational materials to share with the public and getting proposals from independent contractors for community outreach and a survey to confirm voter support.

Colon Cancer Awareness Extravaganza

Saturday, March 19

11 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Kaweah Delta Medical Center
Acequia Wing Lobby
305 W. Acequia Ave.

Information: 624-9374

Learn how to prevent, treat, and beat colorectal cancer, the second leading cause of cancer deaths in the U.S.

- Tour a 10-foot-tall replica of advanced colon cancer
- Talk to physicians
- Visit interactive stations and information booths

Kaweah Delta Medical Center
A division of Kaweah Delta Health Care District

Park Advisory Committee Gives the Green Light for TNR

Catherine Doe

After three-and-a-half years of contentious negotiations with the Tulare County Board of Supervisors (TCBOS,) the county and Visalia Feral Cat Coalition(VFCC) finally came to an agreement to implement the Trap Neuter Release Program (TNR) at Mooney Grove Park.

At the March 10 Park Advisory Committee (PAC) members voted unanimously to approve a one-year TNR pilot project to handle the feral cat population in the park. Earlier in the day, the VFCC met with John Hess, Tulare County Administrative Analyst, to finalize details of the agreement between their group and the county.

At the end of the day, PAC and VFCC were happy with the presentations and ensuing discussions that lead to a final decision. The VFCC were very impressed with the effort that the county had put into the negotiations and felt that during the last few months they had been heard and understood.

The agreement between the two parties stated that the volunteer cat feeders would come to the park between 8am and 5pm. The designated "feeders" would spend 20-30 minutes feeding the cats and then would clean up the bowls and any leftover food before they left. Bowls of water will be left in discreet places for the cats,especially in the summer. No cat food is to be given to any of the birds or other wild animals. When it is deemed that a cat needs to be trapped in order to be neutered, a date and time will be arranged with Neil Pilegard, director of Tulare County Parks and Recreation.

Finally, it was agreed that all VFCC volunteers keep their feeding operations at least 30-feet away from the Tulare County Museum.

TNR had been practiced in Mooney Grove on a very casual basis for the last three years. Because of these good Samaritans, there are only two cats left of the original 12 at the museum and only six left out of the original 24 by the bridge, according to theVFCC. The VFCC said that it may be possible that other pockets of feral cats are hiding in Mooney Grove and the situation will be assessed if discovered.

Dr. Larry Webber,member of the VFCC, pointed out to the committee that even though there is a huge semi-feral cat population right next door at the trailer park, the concept of the cat colony keeping out other cats is working.

"The science of TNR is working," he said.

The pilot project will be evaluated after the one-year anniversary.

As far as the Mooney Grove Trailer Park, the VFCC is planning another sweep in April or May. The process of trapping, spaying and releasing takes about three days and is all volunteer. In the meantime, residents of the park have an open door policy at Companion Animal Medical Center and can bring in any cat and get them vaccinated and spayed for $15.

Members of Parks Advisory Committee Courtney Roche, Mike Chrisman, Carol Finney, Neil Pilegard, and Nancy Hawkins tour Cutler Park. Catherine Doe/Valley Voice

Mike Chrisman, PAC chair and the VFCC will be giving a TNR presentation to the TCBOS at its regular meeting April 19. The board will be asked to vote on the item after the presentation to finalize the agreement between Mooney Grove and the VFCC.

In other news of the county parks, the Mooney Grove Park well is still not on line. Edison still needs to install a conduit before the well is operational. Because the issue of the cat population in the park has been resolved, PAC is ready to transition to quarterly meetings after the April meeting. Its focus will change to implementing the 20-year master plan and prioritizing the infrastructure needs of all the parks, in particular the irrigation and electrical systems.

The next PAC meeting will be at Ledbetter Park April 21 at 3pm. Ledbetter Park is in Cutler right off of Highway 63 and Ave 408. Public participation is encouraged and all are invited to attend.

Terra Bella Sees Upgrades Through County and Community Efforts

Nancy Vigran

In an effort to continue with projects for some of the unincorporated areas of the county, the Tulare County Board of Supervisors and county staff have focused some of their attention to Terra Bella. But, their efforts have not been without help. Setton Farms Pistachio, a long-time member of the community has aided in the projects.

A lot of community input was accessed to aide in the Terra Bella Community Plan update, presented to supervisors in November, 2015, said Michael Washam, assistant director of Economic Planning and Development Department (EDD) for the county.

The plan is a part of the overall general plan on the county in part with economic development along the Highway 65 and 99 corridors¸ but also aimed at making each of the communities "safer, healthier and more sustainable."

Efforts have been made toward completing some street and sidewalk projects including the "Safe Routes to School" program. The county also aims to generate more flexibility in zoning to allow more than one use for a property – such as a business with an attached residence and/or allowing for quicker start-up time for a potential business to a community.

The county has been highly successful in receiving grant funding for many recent projects throughout the county. The same has been quite helpful in the Terra Bella community providing funds for street and sidewalk work involving five streets and the sidewalks close to Terra Bella Elementary School.

But, far and away, one of the most significant recent improvements for the community is a recreational area, perceived and brought to fruition through Setton Farms, Washman said.

"We went to the school and asked for input about what they ¬[residents] wanted to see in the park," said David Goad, Setton Farms plant manager.

Improvements were made in a walking track, and a new stainless steel drinking water filling station was added, trees and shrubs were planted and barbecue pits with shelters and picnic tables were placed along with playground equipment. Privacy fencing has also been built.

While Setton provided the plans and organization, along with the land, it asked its business partners to participate as well.

Some of its pistachio growers donated funding, a local electrician who is contracted by the plant, provided solar lights for the recreational area, and a local manufacturer installed the barbecue pits and shelters, Goad said.

"It's a team effort," he said.

The park is irrigated with recycled water from the plant.

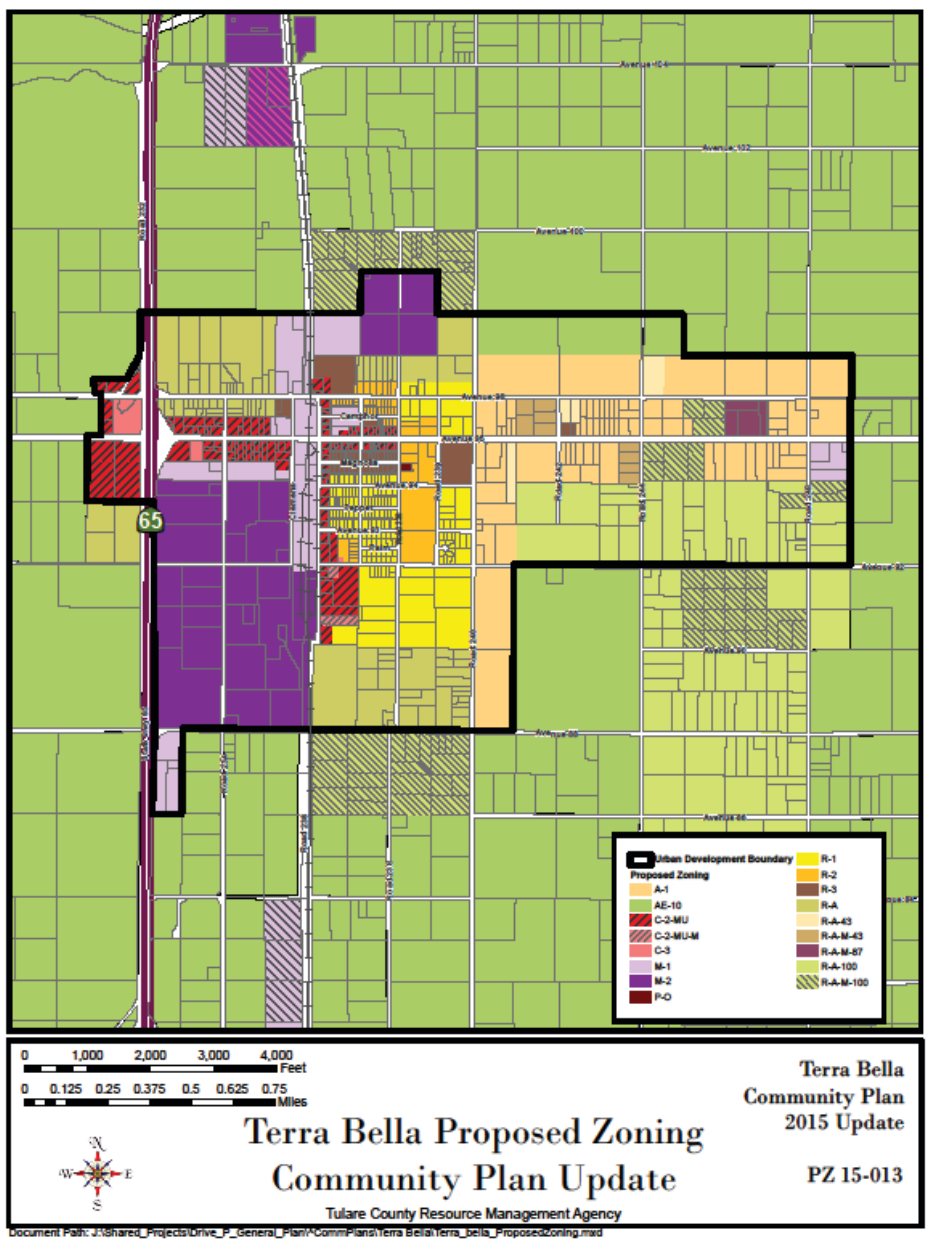
"We're part of the town – our employees live here – we are Terra Bella, we're right in the middle of town," he said.

Supervisor Mike Ennis said that the park "is a great, great asset to the community," in a video produced by EDD and displayed on YouTube.

The park has been a community project," Washam said. "There is no graffiti and no vandalism."

Another recent addition to the community is a Family Healthcare Network clinic in 2014. The clinic has been extremely well received by those in the area, Washman said.

The county has also been active in taking down old, dilapidated buildings in the area – but not just by bulldozing them down.



"There is a sustainable and historic approach to this," Washam said. "Boards are pulled off carefully for reuse or refurbishing as are the old windows."

And with all of this, more improvements still may come in the near future to Terra Bella and other small communities within the county, Washam said.

The Tulare County "Build a Day in Terra Bella" may be viewed at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=or96RiMBjhc

Voices of the Valley

Kings County Sheriff Dave Robinson

Nancy Vigran

Some may call it happenstance, some may call it fate, but it was not the intention of an 18-year-old Dave Robinson to go into law enforcement.

Robinson grew up in Hanford and has lived there all of his life, except for a short time when he went away to attend Cuesta College in San Luis Obispo. While attending school and working a part-time job, Robinson wasn't quite sure what avenue he was going to take in life and then he started having chest pains.

Taken to the hospital he was found to have a collapsed lung due to a weak spot, something not uncommon for lanky, tall young men, he was told. He spent 16 days in the hospital and had surgery to repair his lung. Then returned home to recuperate.

"I went deep-sea fishing that day with my grandfather, and had to work that night at the farmer's market in downtown San Luis Obispo," he said,"and while I was at work I just felt chest pain and went to the hospital and they said that my lung had collapsed. It was wild!"

"Health wise, it never slowed me down," he said. "It healed and I was fine . . . and I have never had an issue since."

Robinson decided not to return to Cuesta and took an old job back at K-Mart, where he began working in shipping and receiving, which also included chasing after shoplifters.

"That's what got me into law enforcement," he said. "I liked it!"

Robinson was looking through a College of Sequoias catalog one day and ran across the college's Police Academy, which was then located in Visalia. He signed up and never looked back.

While he graduated from the academy in 1992, he did not find a position in law enforcement until 1995 with the Kings County Sheriff Department.

"There was an opening in the jail and I was fortunate enough to get hired. My long-term goal was to work the streets and after about a year, I was assigned to Hanford patrol."

Robinson was later reassigned to the Avenal substation, which at that time had a pretty significant crime rate, he said. He then moved on to gang-enforcement and was selected to serve on a multi-agency task force for 10 years, three of which he worked as a detective.

"I was fascinated by gangs and what makes them tick," he said.

He was promoted to sergeant, but then left the sheriff's office deciding to take a position with the Kings County District Attorney's office, as an investigator, where he worked as liaison to three state prisons operating within the county.

"It was interesting," he said, "seeing how they worked – they were like little cities.

And, it helped me to understand the correctional aspects – working and dealing with inmates."

Robinson also served on the Sheriff's Honor Guard and as a team leader on Kings County SWAT. He completed his Bachelor of Science degree in 2008, majoring in Criminal Justice Management.

When Robinson first ran for Kings County Sheriff in 2010, he was 38 years old. He was elected that year and started his first term at the age of 39.

"It is pretty unusual," he said, "There's a reason for that, because there is a high risk involved for those of us who are not to retirement age. In the law enforcement sector, generally retirement age is 55 years old. But, you can take early retirement at 50 years old. So, if you run for sheriff in your 30's and you don't get re-elected, there is no going back to a different position – you are out of a job.

"So, there's a high risk involved for someone who runs and if you don't get re-elected and now you're out of a job, you have to go find another job – well what other job do you go find? Maybe a police chief job . . . and those aren't necessarily easy to get into.

"You have to really weigh the factor of, do I really want to have to go start over somewhere else, if I'm out of a job.

"I think that is a major reason that you don't see a lot of people in their 30's or 40's – it's not that they don't necessarily meet the qualifications or have the experience, it's just that there is a risk involved," he concluded.

"To me it was worth the risk involved because I grew up in this county for one, but I also grew up in this organization – it was my first law enforcement job," he said."I started in the jail and I am very passionate about the sheriff's office. I love the sheriff's office and what we do, and what it's all about. And so the risk-reward, for me, was definitely worth the challenge.

"I'm really glad that I did. I love coming to work every day. I can't wait to get up in the morning and come to work."

Robison admits that thinking about his work sometimes gives him insomnia and he may get up at 3am to come into the office, or to work on his computer at home. He knows that it happens for other people in different jobs as well, but he said he just has things he wants to accomplish.

"The staff that works here are amazing – I couldn't do what I do without the staff," he said. "We have such a great team atmosphere here. And that is not to say, I don't want to mislead anyone, it is not that 100% of the staff here think everything I do is amazing, but we have such a great team that the vast, vast majority of staff are all on the same page of the direction we want the department to go and with the vision that we see for moving things forward in that we work with our community."

"The direction for me is that we want to serve our community. I tell people all the time – I work for the citizens. I work for my employees – they are also citizens here – we all work together. And so, the direction is that we want to do everything we can to keep our community safe as our number one priority. In providing that service, I want to make sure that we give our staff the tools that they need, the equipment that they need, the infrastructure that they need, to provide the best service possible.

"One of the things we have worked really hard at, as a team," Robinson said,"is building out our jail facilities to the expansion. One of the things, when I took office that was a primary focus of the campaign, was to reduce the early releases. We were seeing so many early releases back into our community, where people were getting arrested and then they would immediately walk out the door. I am really proud of the effort that we have made, even under the circumstances of realignment and Prop 47 – we were going for hundreds of early releases, even more than a thousand or more early releases for a couple of years, to SEVEN last year," he emphasized. "So we've taken that and just really driven home that we don't want to release people early.

"We don't mind getting them out into a live-in program. We don't mind getting them into something that will help them and hopefully reduce revisiting rates, but as far as just releasing them early with nothing hanging over their head, we are working really hard to reduce that. And, I have to give my staff kudos – they have really worked hard to carry that vision forward."

"We recently started up, and it's really close," Robinson said excitedly, "to work with the State of California and the fire camps. And so, we will be sending some of our inmates to the state fire camps and that's going to come any day now. We have a few inmates in the hopper that we're just waiting for approval on."

"There's a live-in treatment program in a partnership with the Kings County Probation Department – they partnered with a local recovery group, Champions, and they developed a 49-bed men's residential, live-in treatment program and so now, some of our inmates have qualified. Most of our inmates that are in that program, would have just sat in our jail – now they go live in this facility and get direct treatment for whatever they need – predominately drugs.

"And we're really proud of those things," he said.

Inmates have an incentive to learn a skill – they earn extra time credits for participating in a work-program and with fire camp they may earn very low pay, like $1/hour, Robinson said. While they may not qualify for eventual employment as fire fighters, they learn other skills such as brush clearing, the use of tools and food service skills.

It is an inmate's choice whether he, or she, would like to participate in a program.

As for Robinson, he lived in various areas of the city while growing up, one of two sons of divorced parents.

Kings County Sheriff Dave Robinson. Nancy Vigran/Valley Voice

"I got to learn a lot about the city by living in different places," he said. "I met a lot of people in the community and it has helped with the job that I'm in.

"I have great parents, and [even though divorced] they always communicated with each other," he said.

His dad, retired now, was in cement construction, a job which both Robinson and his brother learned. And while his brother took up work in construction, Robinson, while able to do it, did not want to work with cement in 100+ degree summer heat, he said.

Robinson's work in the jail and with the DA's office helped him realize the emphasis he wanted to put on the Kings County Jail, the focus of which is now more aimed at helping inmates' mindset to prevent future crime, rather than just punishment.

"We're not quite there yet," Robinson said of the county's jail expansion and development.

Following the 252-bed expansion currently underway, Robinson looks to more classroom and program space – including a vocational warehouse, and a culinary kitchen with adjacent classroom.

"We want to decrease revolving door inmates," he said, "and change their minds, so they won't want to come back to jail."

There are still many other improvements he'd like to make. The current office was built in 1964 and stands next to what was the former jail. Robinson would like to see a new office connected to the jail, and a facility where all staff can work under the same roof with "no disconnect." That would take approximately $18 million, he said.

As sheriff, Robinson also oversees Kings County Animal Services, which operates out of the oldest county building in use, he said. Here too, he would like to see new facilities for staff and animals.

"Animal services has a great staff," he said. "They do a great job at reducing euthanasia and focus heavily on spay and neuter."

"This is my sixth year as sheriff and I feel like it just started," Robinson said.

"As I sit here today, I would love to serve two more terms, 10 more years,

ROBINSON continued on **16 »**

Viewpoint

Letter: Chamber of Commerce Endorses Kaweah Delta Bond

An Open Letter to My Fellow Visalians:

Earlier this month the Board of Directors of your Chamber of Commerce voted to support the upcoming bond measure for Kaweah Delta District Hospital. This bond measure will be mailed to you in April. Approval of this bond measure will allow our medical district to respond to new state regulations mandating new earthquake compliant facilities.

Preserving, strengthening and supporting our economy in a cornerstone of the Visalia Chamber of Commerce. As Chairperson of the Board of Directors I am proud of the work the Chamber does in this arena.

Asking taxpayers to help invest in our medical district was not a decision the Board took lightly. However these state mandates are necessary. Given the size and scope of the required project, Kaweah Delta is unable to do it alone. If this bond measure does not pass Kaweah Delta will not meet the new state earthquake compliant facilities requirements and would cause devastating effects on our community economically and personally through loss of jobs and a deterioration of health care choices. Health Care is a key to a successful community and paramount in recruiting new businesses to locate in Visalia. Losing acute care beds, reducing the footprint of Kaweah Delta, and ultimately reducing overall service to our community would hurt that effort and hurt Visalia.

The conversation about supporting the bond initiate cannot exclude the economic impact Kaweah Delta has on our community. The Kaweah Delta Health Care District eight campus footprint contributes $1 billion impact to our local economy.

Employing over 4,200 people (at an average wage of over $30/hr.) these professional career level jobs are vital to our community. Recently, we supported the City in their efforts to recruit a large distribution company to locate in our community. This employer would bring valuable jobs to our region. The City's incentive package to recruit this employer was aggressive as it should be. As a community we are willing to fight for these jobs and the economic impact they will create and it seemed natural to our Board that we would do the same for an employer who has been invested in and contributes to our community and local economy since 1961.

The Visalia Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors supports Kaweah Delta's General Obligation Bond Initiative. We ask you to join us in keeping this important economic engine working for Visalia.

Sincerely,

Norris McElroy
Chairperson
Visalia Chamber of Commerce

Donald Trump—From One Tyrant to Another

One thing I discovered long ago about tyrants: they love other tyrants. They're a mutual admiration/suffering society. When one succeeds by extinguishing dissent, the others applaud; and when one falls, the others cringe.

Donald Trump is a tyrant in thin disguise. He's always talking about the people who have the least interest in supporting him as though they really love him. Mexicans "love me," he says; so do Indians, Jews, non-terrorist Muslims, Chinese, Russians, Japanese, Germans. In fact, Trump will unify them all, he promises. Of course they mostly loathe him, just as Trump loathes all of them, as well as many other non-white groups. What is most revealing, however, are the people Trump admires, such as Vladimir Putin, Saddam Hussein, and Moammar Qaddafi—dictators who, Trump has said, know how to eliminate troublemakers and terrorists. Sure they kill lots of innocent people, but you have to admire their grit.

What Trump specifically admires about tyrants is their willingness to use their power to stay in power. Putin, for instance, wins Trump's applause for dealing decisively with ethnic dissenters, critical journalists, and uncooperative businesspeople—and he evidently sees in Trump his mirror image. Thus as president Trump thinks he would be able to strike a deal with Putin, since tough guys speak the same language. Trump must surely have laughed at George W. Bush for believing that he had looked into Putin's "soul" and found something likeable and trustworthy.

The same goes for China's leaders, whom Trump otherwise detests and is sure he can outsmart. They have his admiration for cracking down on protesters at Tiananmen in 1989. He once told an interviewer: "the Chinese government almost blew it. Then they were vicious, they were horrible, but they put it down with strength. That shows you the power of strength."

Looking into Trump's soul, we see a truly authoritarian personality, someone who will bring the same no-nonsense skills he applies in the business world to the White House. As president, Trump can be expected to keep his own counsel, downgrade expertise, issue orders without consultation, ignore Congress and the law, recklessly conduct foreign affairs, and pay no heed to minorities, women, unions, the press, NGOs, Democrats, and (oh yes) most Republicans. He will insult people willy-nilly and humiliate anyone who gets in his way. He will attack every criticism as a lie, but have no compunctions about lying to push across his ideas. His every audacious act will be carried out in the name of restoring American strength after decades of weakness.

The worst of it all is that for perhaps one-third of the American electorate, and perhaps more, this description of Donald Trump is very appealing. But I remain convinced that, like the tyrants he admires, Trump will fall.

Mel Gurtov, syndicated by PeaceVoice, is Professor Emeritus of Political Science at Portland State University and blogs at In the Human Interest.

War, Peace, and Bernie Sanders

We've had our first big vote, and I'm doing my best to dig Tulsi Gabbard's endorsement of Bernie Sanders out from beneath the pile of Super Tuesday numbers and media declarations of winners and losers.

As a Boston Globe headline put it: "Clinton and Trump are now the presumptive nominees. Get used to it."

But something besides winning and losing still matters, more than ever, in the 2016 presidential race. War and peace and a fundamental questioning of who we are as a nation are actually on the line in this race, or could be — for the first time since 1972 when George McGovern was the Democratic presidential nominee.

Embrace what matters deeply and there's no such thing as losing.

Gabbard, an Iraq war vet, a congresswoman from Hawaii, and "rising star" in the Democratic establishment, stepped down as vice-chair of the Democratic National Committee in order to endorse Sanders — because he's the only candidate who is not financially and psychologically tied to the military-industrial complex.

"As a veteran of two Middle East deployments, I know firsthand the cost of war," she said, cracking the mainstream silence on U.S. militarism. "As a vice chair of the DNC, I am required to stay neutral in democratic primaries, but I cannot remain neutral any longer. The stakes are just too high."

Because of Gabbard — only because of Gabbard — the multi-trillion-dollar monstrosity of U.S. militarism is getting a little mainstream media attention amid the reality-TV histrionics of this year's presidential race, the Donald Trump phenomenon and the spectacle of Republican insult-flinging.

As the results of Super Tuesday started coming in on Tuesday night, Gabbard was given a few minutes to talk on MSNBC. While Rachel Maddow wanted to discuss the risk her Sanders endorsement might have on her career; Gabbard insisted on addressing the slightly larger matter of our unchecked, resource-hemorrhaging military adventurism across the globe.

"War is a very real thing," she said. "If the Syrian war continues, we won't have the resources to fund important social programs. This isn't a question of the past — it's a question of today. Regime-change wars do nothing to strengthen our national security, but they do strengthen our enemies."

Fine. We'll return after these messages . . .

A short while later, the MSNBC analysts' attention snapped back to the Trump phenomenon. Someone opined: "The vast majority of Trump supporters are enamored of winning" far more than they care about the goofball issues Trump is supposedly running on, like the wall across the Mexican border and the ban on Muslims entering the country.

Maybe it's true, and maybe it's not, but I sense the mainstream media is a lot more comfortable with an issue-free presidential race, which is what the powers that be want, of course. The presidential election is supposed to be a distraction, not some kind of public accountability process.

The Sanders phenomenon, while as shocking and unexpected as the success of the Trump campaign, is far too substantive to garner a similar amount of media attention, let alone serious consideration of the issues he's bringing up. Yet remarkably, his call for social change — for the transformation of a "rigged economy" — has not receded to the margins, either.

So what happens next? Tulsi Gabbard's endorsement is the key. As Dave Lindorff recently wrote:

"Sanders, who has been avoiding talking about the country's military budget and its imperialist foreign policy, should use the opportunity of Gabbard's defection from the DNC to announce that if elected he would immediately slash military spending by 25 percent, that he would begin pulling U.S. forces back from most of the 800 or more bases they occupy around the world, and that he would end a decades-long foreign policy of overthrowing elected leaders around the globe."

The shock waves generated by such a stance, from a candidate who already has 386 delegates, would be enormous. Conventional wisdom cries no, no, that's too much. No matter how much harm our wars have caused in the last decade, no matter how absurd a slice that war preparation — including nuclear weapons development — gouges from the national budget, the U.S. military, the planet's biggest polluter and most prolific terrorist, remains untouchable. The public has no say in these matters. The president has no say in these matters.

This delusion goes back to the Vietnam War and McGovern's loss to Richard Nixon. Since then, the Democrats have attempted to purge themselves of anti-war — or what perhaps should be called trans-military — thinking. In doing so, they've tied themselves to their own, and the country's, inevitable collapse.

The other option is transformation. This is the year it could begin.

Robert Koehler, syndicated by PeaceVoice, is a Chicago award-winning journalist and editor.

Comments & Letters

Letter: Vote for Sales Tax

Jerrold Jensen

Maintaining the quality of life we enjoy in Visalia comes with a price tag. In November we need to decide whether to increase our local sales tax. Why? Demands on our police and fire services have soared in the last decade. Calls to 911 calls rose from 34,000 in 2005 to 97,000 in 2015 and it shouldn't surprise anyone that complaints about homeless/vagrant activity went from 100 in 2005 to 3,400 in the same period. In total, city police and fire departments responded to 159,000 calls in 2015.

So why am I writing about this now if the issue won't be on the ballot for months? Don't let this need get lost while we are voting on other possible taxes. In November we will vote on whether to increase our local sales tax rate by 50 cents on $100 of taxable purchases. It will add $2.50 to the cost of your new $500 TV.

Unfortunately we cannot build a moat around Visalia while changes in state law put more and more pressure on local law enforcement. State prison overcrowding and realignment is forcing early release for many convicted criminals and the passage of Prop. 47 reduced many felonies to misdemeanors which now allows petty criminals to remain free to commit additional crimes. Another statewide initiative this year will further reduce prison time for many offenses. We thought we addressed this challenge when we passed the local Measure T sales tax years ago but revenue isn't growing fast enough to hire all of the additional police officers the city expected to have by 2016.

Between August and January, two independent citizen committees - none were city employees - reviewed Visalia's budget. I was a member of one of those committees and we met separately with each of the city department heads on multiple occasions while they explained their needs and the impact of the great recession on their funding. Both committees reached the same decision and recommended the city council put the local sales tax increase on the November ballot.

Obviously the city has other needs beyond just increasing funds for the Police Department which we will write about closer to the November election. Our committees didn't find perfection in our city management but they deserve credit for the way they managed through the recession. They maintained support for public safety by cutting personnel and public services elsewhere - we need to restore some of that funding. Regarding pensions, new employees hired since 2008 contribute more, will have a lower payout rate and their eligible retirement age has been raised. The city has also done a good job on controlling health care costs. The premium for their locally managed plan costs about 30% less than a similar state run CalPers program and city employees pay half of the cost of any increases.

Even with a proposed increase in our sales tax, Visalia will be a relative bargain in Tulare County. Unlike Visalia, the nearby cities of Tulare, Dinuba, Porterville and Lindsay collect a 6% or 7% tax on utility bills. They also have much larger local sales tax overrides.

Keep this local sales tax on your radar for November as you consider other important tax proposals that we consider in the next few months. Maintaining the quality of life in our special little city does require that we spend a few dollars more.

Murphy's Fortune

Comment on Facebook: fb.me/ourvalleyvoice
and on our website: ourvalleyvoice.com

"So enjoyed reading this commentary. Politicians were more approachable during those times, not a "cartoon" standing in for the office as it appears to be this day."

— ***nancy randell** on **Political Fix (3 March, 2016)***

"Wow… was glad to see Marilyn Mitchell as Grand Marshal. So excited for her!- I could not attend but wish MArilyn all the very best. She is as Wonderful person; and deserves any honor bestowed stowed on her…

CONGRATS… a long time co- worker

CHARLOTTE MONTGOMERY"

— ***Charlotte** on **Celebrate St. Patrick's Day in Visalia with Parade and More!***

"I recently moved to the Hanford/ Visalia area from Sacramento and still have family there – including my son. The Seaport airline flights was a big reason for being comfortable won the move.

I used the airline 6 times and had cancellations another 3 times.

I tried the Amtrak train this past weekend and enjoyed it – despite the constant honking but I can only see myself using it and not my son as there is a bus ride from Sacramento to Stockton. My options have been limited. I know that we will be using an airline pretty much twice every other weekend as long as the flight times are reasonable. Again with Boutique Air, The Oakland lag is also interesting – My wife is planning on relocating from San Jose to Hanford – an Oakland or San Jose trip from Visalia could allow her to fly daily from Visalia. With limited opportunities in the valley, I think these travel options can make the valley a lot more attractive.

i agree with earlier comment that Fresno could be better – for me direct flights to Sacramento and San Jose/ Oakland would be a great plus. Willing to buy a years worth of ticket if it helps :)"

— ***Aman** on **Three Airlines Bid for Visalia Service***

"Would like to get a set of Buxman's lithographs. Are there four or five? Please reserve a set for me. My ex-husband worked with Will for as many years as he worked for the phone company and I went to WUHS with Will. Last time I saw Will was at my ex-husband's services which was 8+ years ago. I wish him well with his farming endeavors."

— ***Josie Rendon** on **"Drill for Will" Project for Well Deepening Reaches Out***

"I once was cared for for 14 months as a young girl at Grace home's I have lots to say about it but not willing to do so on hear I'm a person who likes to speak out to whom ever needs to hear me not hid behind my phone and judge or try and be on ether side that's all for now wish every single person involved the best god bless."

— ***Jessica** on **Former Long-Time Grace Homes Employee Sues the Ministry***

Print replica edition at issuu.com/ourvalleyvoice

Veteran's Corner

Disability Benefits Questionnaire

Joe Wright

With Disability Benefits Questionnaires (DBQs), Veterans now have more control over the disability claims process.

Veterans have the option of visiting a private health care provider instead of a VA facility to complete their disability evaluation form.

DBQs are standardized medical documents approved by the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) that are currently used by Veterans Healthcare Administration (VHA) disability examiners to record diseases and illnesses for Veterans' compensation disability benefit claims.

DBQs can also be used by VHA primary care/specialty care providers, as well as private sector physicians, as a standardized format for communication of medical evidence as part of the Veteran's claim for VA disability benefits.

VHA supports the completion of DBQs by treating providers and encourages a "no wrong door" philosophy to assist our Veterans.

DBQs also help support VA's Fully Developed Claims (FDC) Program. DBQs are valuable for claims processing because they provide medical information that is directly relevant to determining a disability rating.

When submitted with a fully developed claim, DBQs ensure the VA's ratings specialists have precisely the information they need to start processing the claim.

Veterans can have their providers fill out any of the more than 70 DBQs that are appropriate for their conditions.

It's that easy! For more information about DBQs and their use you can call and schedule an appointment to speak with one of our accredited veteran service representatives.

The Kings County Veterans Service Office issues Veteran I.D. cards to honorably discharged veterans. Contact Joe Wright if you would like to receive periodic veteran's information by email. There are many state and federal benefits and programs available to veterans and their dependents.

To find out if you are eligible for any of these benefits, visit or call our office. We can and will assist you in completing all required application forms. You can get information on the Web from the Kings County Veterans Service Office webpage at www.countyofkings.com.

Joe Wright, retired Navy Master Chief Petty Officer, is the Veterans Service Officer for Kings County. Send your questions to the Veterans Service Office, 1400 W. Lacey Blvd, Hanford, CA 93230; call 852-2669; or e-mail joe.wright@co.kings.ca.us.

Briefly...

CITY OF VISALIA SEEKS HOUSING FEEDBACK

The City of Visalia is seeking citizen feedback on the Housing Draft 2015 Amendments and 2016 Action Plan activities via community meetings taking place through April.

The City's Affordable Housing Division, whose programs provide critical financing and other incentives for the creation and preservation of affordable housing, drafted the amendments and plan on the priorities adopted through the 2015-2019 Consolidated Plan process. The community is invited to attend one of the community or Council meetings to review the plan and offer comments. The schedule of public meetings include:

- Monday, April 4th at 7 p.m. – Visalia City Council Meeting, held at the City Hall Council Chambers located at 707 West Acequia, Visalia. The Draft Action Plan will be an item on the Consent Calendar.
- Wednesday, April 6th at 5:30 p.m. – Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting, held at the City Administration Building located at 220 N. Santa Fe, Visalia.
- Monday, April 18th at 7 p.m. – Visalia City Council Meeting, held at the City Hall Council Chambers located at 707 West Acequia, Visalia. This will be the Public Hearing Meeting on the Final 2016 Action Plan.

For those unable to attend a public meeting, but who would like more information on the Draft Action Plan or would like to submit a written comment, you may do so until April 8, 2016, by contacting Rhonda Haynes, Housing Specialist, City of Visalia by email at rhonda.haynes@visalia.city or by phone at (559) 713-4460.

For more information on this and other services of the City of Visalia Affordable Housing Division, visit www.visalia.city/depts/community_development.

Robinson

Continued from p. 13

equaling four terms total. If still as passionate as I am today, maybe more."

Robinson has four children – two with his previous wife, and two with his current wife, Melonie, who is a Hanford school teacher. His children range from age 5 to 22, and the family enjoys camping, fishing and hunting. He visits with his mom and dad, both retired, as well as two of his grandparents, who are still living in town.

Robinson travels frequently to the state capitol to meet with the state's decision makers, he said. He has been involved with the California State Sheriff's Associations for several years and now serves on its board of directors.

He is an Elks Lodge member and was active with sports booster clubs when his first two children were in high school. He has coached Little League as well as soccer, and can see becoming active in booster clubs again, time permitting.

As sheriff, Robinson became a member of the Kings County Sheriff's Posse. He hadn't ridden a horse since he was about 14 years old. When elected in 2010, a friend gave him some riding lessons, and now he rides in parades with the posse every year, including the 2012 Rose Parade. The 79-year-old posse does more than just ride in parades though, Robinson said, it is involved search and rescue, and it fundraises for the sheriff's department K-9 unit as well as the Explorer program.

"It's an honor to serve Kings County," Robinson said.

He gives out his personnel cell number to anyone who asks.

"If someone wants to talk to the sheriff," he said, "they should be able to talk to the sheriff."

What would Dave Robinson be doing is he hadn't entered into law enforcement? Well, he might be forecasting the weather.

"Not like a television meteorologist," he said, "but I have always been fascinated with weather – although I could not be in an office all day."

State, Local Officials Back Ruben Macareno for Assembly District 26

With the California Democratic Party endorsement recently secured, Ruben Macareno has received the endorsement of State Insurance Commissioner Dave Jones for his campaign for the 26th State Assembly seat.

Jones cites Macareno's "tremendous leadership and advocacy" in his endorsement. "I appreciate the vote of confidence from Dave Jones. I am extremely humbled to receive his support," said Macareno. "Jones and I share the same vision on jobs, education and public safety. I look forward to working with him to help move our communities forward."

Jones plans to run for Attorney General 2018.

Macareno is the chairman of the Tulare County Democratic Party.

On the local level Macareno has received the endorsements from the Farmersville Mayor Greg Gomez, Farmersville Unified School District Trustee Lupe Fernandez,.and Operating Engineers Local 3 Member, and one-time candidate for mayor of San Jose, Larry Flores. He also recently received the endorsements from the Porterville Democratic Club, Tulare County Democratic Party, and Stonewall Democrats of Tulare County. Sesar Carreno, president of Altura Centers of Health also just gave his endorsement.

Grace Calderon, Tulare County Fair director and Jack Gonzalez, vice chair of the Tulare County Democratic Central Committee also added their names to Macareno's list of endorsements.

The 26th Assembly District encompasses a large part of Tulare County, all of Inyo County and the northern edge of Kern County.

VALLEY VOICE
Valley Scene
17 March, 2016

Visalia Votes for Art Project

Catherine Doe

At its March 7 Visalia City Council meeting, members voted 5-0 in favor of a project to beautify the city. The project was the brain child of Elaine Martell, executive director of Downtown Visalians, and Mary Jo Eastes, of Arts Visalia, who had both seen, while traveling out of state, large electrical boxes turned into pieces of urban art by local painters. That's where the conversation started about Visalia doing the same thing, except on the city-owned garbage enclosures.

"As far as I know Visalia will be the only city to have such an art project," said Eastes.

A San Francisco electrical box painted by artist Mona Caron. Courtesy/ Mona Caron/Facebook

Once the policies on the beautification project are finalized, local artists who want to paintcity garbage enclosures would need to follow the same procedure as potential muralists. The artist will fill out an application that would include a draft of their proposed artwork. The Art Enclosure policies and application should be finalized by May or before.

That artwork would have to be approved by a panel comprised of two representatives from City Council, one representative each from Arts Visalia and the Arts Consortium, and two business representatives. If the art project is downtown, the business representatives would come from Downtown Visalians. If the art project is outside of the downtown area the Chamber and the Hispanic Chamber would each be asked to appoint someone to the review panel.

While traditional murals are generally large, installed on buildings, and permanent in nature, the thought behind Solid Waste Enclosure Art is that it would usually be smaller insize, may include different mediums, and the contracts would be set up to be short term, probably 1-5 years depending on an agreement between the enclosure owner and the artist. The approval process has been set up to include business representation since enclosures aregenerally located in business areas.According to Eastes there are about 13 of city-owned enclosuresthat would be eligible for artists to paint a mini mural.

Downtown Visalians and Arts Visalia were the driving force behind the project and submitted a letter asking the city "for approval for a concept which would be a Visual Enhancement to our downtown. It would serve dual purposes, add public art for the community and greatly improve a normally unsightly area." They continued, "The trash enclosure enhancement project will involve the art community and local high school students in art classes. We believe that the art on the enclosures will engage the public much like the art on the fire hydrants has done; will instill pride and encourage those using the enclosures to keep the area free of liter and graffiti."

In 2008 Visalia developed a Cultural Plan that stated that a city's physical beauty and image can be greatly enhanced with public art including murals. In addition, the Downtown Visalians and Arts Visalia have also long been interested in having more art in the community. These two organizations have sponsored art projects, including the children's hands project along the Garden Street Plaza alley, and the Art on Fire project in the downtown. The two organizations hope that by adding the Solid Waste Enclosures, it will facilitate the walking arts tour that already encompasses the murals and the fire hydrants and be another attraction in the downtown.

Diane Gomez, "Flock Together"

Art of the Book Comes to Porterville College

Staff Reports

The public is invited to see the exhibition of book art by artists Kim Elia, Diane Gomez, Justine Light, Mona Selph and Martha Widmann. *Art of the Book* runs through March 31 in the Porterville College Art Gallery.

This show is of artists' approaches to making books, which are handmade, one of a kind pieces that stem from the artist's own individual inspirations and open an unexplored world. Each artist in this show produces book art from widely different perspectives and backgrounds.

Artist Diana Gomez stated her approach, "I use my art like Alice's rabbit hole, to open an unexplored world, a place of curious self-expression, but also a world of new relationships, new chances, new beginnings and most importantly, new stories."

Artist Mona Selph's background as an artist and art teacher has influenced her art studio experience.

"I have practiced and taught many media, genre and approaches to art-making, but until a few years ago (except for producing children's book dummies or models), I had never tried art book making," Selph said. "I have had a lot of fun exploring new approaches and a new kind of art-making of late, especially for this show."

Martha Widmann's work for the show, "Cleaning Houses" involves combining photography and bookmaking to create a personal narrative journal. She first started this piece back in 1996, but left it unfinished.

"I have brought it out to work on at various times over the past 20 years," Widmann said. "I am amazed at how this piece still speaks to me after all this time and, while I feel almost embarrassed, it has become one of those evolving pieces that has made me feel I am collaborating with that previous version of myself as a 37-year-old."

Justine Light's approach to bookmaking or any other media is "to make beautiful that which others find disturbing, to take a simple concept (good and evil) and mold it into something complex and magnetic."

Kim Elia's approach is much more direct, "Handmade books are a fun way to capture all the little bits of paper in our lives, photos, recipes, a good article, etc."

The exhibition will run through March 31. Gallery hours are Monday through Thursday from 12-2pm and 4-6pm. For parking, contact the front desk when you arrive to visit the show for a free temporary parking permit.

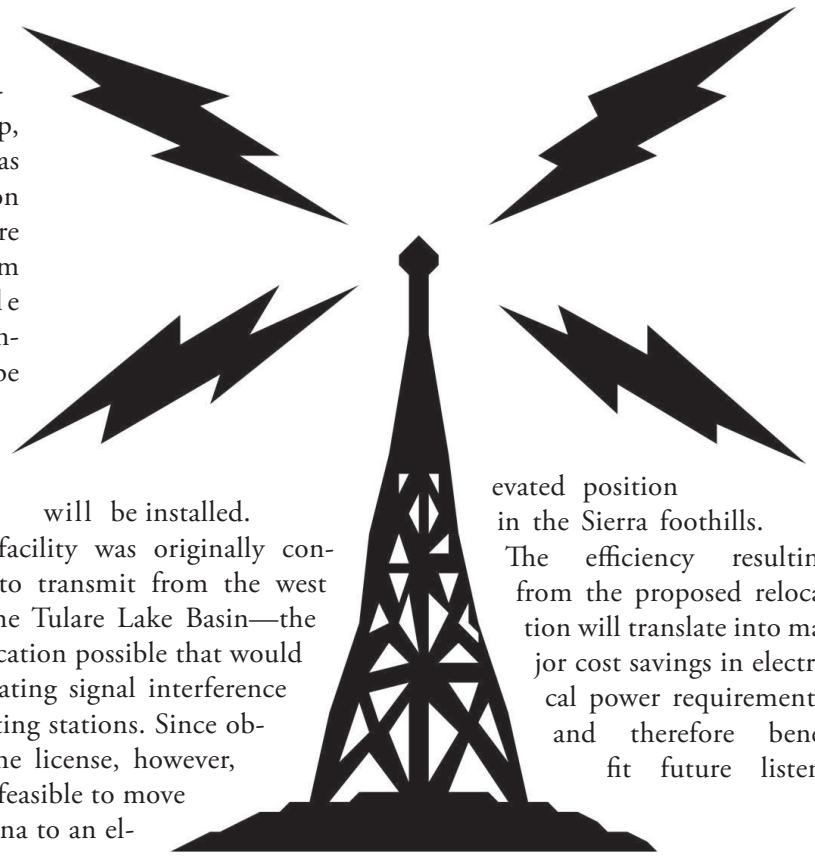
The Porterville College Art Gallery is located on campus at 100 East College Avenue in Porterville. Please contact Jim Entz at 791-2257 for more information.

Community Radio Station Coming to the South Valley

Don Manro

Many may not have realized that there are a number of gaps in Tulare County's regional media landscape. There has been no public access television outlet or community radio station located inside Tulare County. Fortunately, a non-profit corporation, South Valley Community Media (SVCM), has been newly formed to fill that void.

SVCM is nearly able to tune in to a brand new radio station broadcasting on the portion of the FM spectrum reserved for non-commercial educational entities. KPSV, 91.9 MHz, is licensed and preparing to go on the air in early May. Its signal coverage is designed to reach communities on the Valley floor within Tulare County and in parts of bordering counties. Streaming on the World Wide Web from KPSV.org will allow distant residents and people living in the shadow of the foothills to be included. The website is up, and it has a donation page where a program schedule will eventually be posted and an audio player will be installed.



The facility was originally constructed to transmit from the west side of the Tulare Lake Basin—the closest location possible that would avoid creating signal interference with existing stations. Since obtaining the license, however, it is now feasible to move the antenna to an elevated position in the Sierra foothills. The efficiency resulting from the proposed relocation will translate into major cost savings in electrical power requirements, and therefore benefit future listener-subscribers.

The estimated cost of the transmission equipment and furnishing of a studio is estimated to be between $30 to $40 thousand dollars. SVCM is scheduled to launch a fundraising campaign for that purpose and begin to acquaint the public with the concept of community owned and operated media. Look for the KPSV-FM table at Visalia's downtown Farmers Market at Church Street and Main, starting on Thursday March 17.

The primary advantage of community radio over public and commercial stations is that the content will reflect the diversity of the community, bridging language, cultural and ideological barriers. KPSV-FM and all future SVCM media projects will be run democratically with open membership and member representation on the board of directors. Projects will be staffed almost entirely by community volunteers.

Garden Festival at Visalia Library

The Tulare County Library and the University of California Tulare/Kings Master Gardeners will welcome spring at the Visalia Garden Festival on March 19, from 9am to 1pm on the south lawn of the Visalia Branch Library at 200 W. Oak Avenue.

March 18 will be a "Preview Day" from 12 noon to 2pm, featuring the Master Gardeners' information/diagnosis/FAQ booth inside the Visalia Branch Library.

For the main Festival event on Saturday, the UC Master Gardeners staff the informational booths on a wide variety of subjects. One area covers edible gardening, where experts offer advice about vegetable gardens, citrus trees, and other fruit trees. This booth also includes details about planting, fertilizing and integrated pest management. A second area covers landscape maintenance, with discussions on drought tolerant landscape design, turf choices, irrigation systems, and general yard maintenance issues. A third booth contains information on ornamentals, including succulents, annual, and perennial plants. This area focuses on California natives and drought tolerant selections. The fourth booth, on landscape pillars, features experts offering advice and information on tree, shrub and vine selection suitable to the Central Valley's climate and drought situation. The City of Visalia's Natural Resource Conservation Division representative offers information on low-water use landscapes and other water conservation practices.

There will be a scavenger hunt during the Festival. Kids can visit the different booths and ask questions of the Master Gardeners to get the scavenger answers. They can learn about the gardening world and win a cool prize upon completion of the hunt.

In conjunction with the Garden Festival, the Visalia Friends of the Tulare County Library hosts their "Spring Cleaning" Book Sale, scheduled from 9am to 2pm inside the library. The sale features a variety of books, including fiction, mystery, history, biography, art, and cookbooks, with prices starting at $.50 each. Special sets and coffee table books are priced at $5 each. In addition to this selection, the Friends gathered gardening related books for this joint event. Proceeds from the Friends of the Tulare County Library sale benefit the Tulare County Library Summer Reading Programs at all our branches.

Master Gardeners are members of communities trained by the University of California Cooperative Extension in different aspects of plant science. These volunteers completed a 17-week training program and passed the certifying exam. To remain certified, they complete annual educational and volunteer requirements. Founded in 1972 in Washington State, These programs have spread to over 45 states and 4 Canadian provinces, with more than 45,000 volunteers. In California, Sacramento and Riverside led the way with pilot programs in 1980 with many of those original graduates still active today. Programs now thrive in more than 50 counties across the state and are a significant resource of gardening information. They are the official "formal volunteers" of the University of California Cooperative Extension.

All Visalia Garden Festival events are free. No registration is required. For more information, contact Tulare County Library's Visalia Branch at 713-2703,

World Link foreign exchange students with their local coordinator Crissy Libby, third from right.

Foreign Exchange Students to Dance, Sing During First Friday Art Walk

Donna Orozco

Foreign exchange students from former USSR countries will danceand sing in their cultural costumes and present storyboards about their countries during Downtown Visalia's First Friday art walk from 5-8pm on April 1. They will perform at the Center for Spiritual Awareness, 117 S. Locust (one block south of Main).

The Center will also feature art and photographs by Richard Garoogian.

The students are part of World Link, a private non-profit foreign exchange student program. Local coordinator Crissy Libby explained that the students are from two programs funded by the US Department of State: FLEX (Future Leader's Exchange) and YES (Youth Exchange and Study). FLEX began after the break-up of the former USSR, and includes students from such countries as the Ukraine, Republic of Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Kazahkstan. YES began as a result of 9/11, with students primarily from Muslim countries.

The programs seek to improve the understanding and cooperation among peoples and cultures of the world.

"We are empowering the students to take the skills, ideas and positives they learn during their exchange year and use these things in alumni activities back in their home countries, in hopes they will make a positive impact for the benefit of future generations," said Libby.

The students speak beautiful English, live with host families and attend high school in the Central Valley. They are required to make presentations and do volunteer work.

"When I first began coordinating the program in 2010, the word 'volunteer' didn't exist in several of these countries' vocabularies," said Libby. "One student from Azerbaijan told me that people did not do things for other people without some sort of monetary compensation unless they were a slave.

"I have noticed over the past few years, more and more students are writing in their applications about volunteering in the home communities. So in just a few short years, the alumni of FLEX and YES programs have made a difference in their home communities, and the idea of helping one another because it feels right is catching on."

American students can also apply to be foreign exchange students through the program.

World Link is currently seeking host families in Central Valley cities and towns for the 2016-17 school year. Students arrive in August, but many schools have placement deadlines so families are needed now. Please call Crissy Libby at 559 901-0275 for information.

For more details, go to www.worldlinkinc.org.

What's Happening at
TACHI PALACE HOTEL & CASINO

REO SPEEDWAGON
THURSDAY, MARCH 31ST
Doors Open at 6PM • Showtime at 7:30PM
Located in the Bingo Hall
Ticket Prices - $40, $50, $80

ARRIBA EL NORTE
SUNDAY, APRIL 17TH
Doors Open at 5PM • Showtime at 6PM
Located in the Bingo Hall
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The Spring Show & Young Masters Open at Kings Art Center

The Spring Show, hosted by the Kings County Art League and organized by the Kings Art Center, is an exhibit of more than 75 new works by local and regional artists. This annual open entry exhibit, a favorite in the community, has been presented at various local venues for more than 60 years. From China Alley, to the Bastille, the Civic Center Park, and the Thursday Night Market, it now is again in the Marcellus gallery at the Kings Art Center.

As in the past, ribbons and cash awards will be presented to the top three winners in six categories - Watercolor; Painting; Photography; Mixed Media/Drawing; Fiber; and Sculpture. The judge for this year's exhibit is Kevin Bowman. Bowman holds a BA in Fine Arts and an MA in Printmaking and teaches at the College of Sequoias. For the past eight years he has served as director and curator for Arts Visalia, a non-profit visual arts center.

Spring's Promise by Dossie Welch

The exhibit opening and awards program will be held on Friday, April 1 from 5:30-7:30 pm. The exhibit runs through May 21. All are welcome.

Young Masters

Each year the Kings Art Center coordinates an exhibition of artwork by K-12 students in Kings County Schools. This exhibit, titled "The Young Master," is again sponsored by the Kings County Office of Education.

For the Kings Art Center, this is an opportunity to advance its mission and nurture the future of the arts in Kings County. It is also used as a way to encourage and validate the efforts of Kings County teachers and schools as they work to provide a comprehensive education to children in spite of budget and time constraints. It is also an opportunity to exhibit quality artwork in a genre our visitors truly enjoy and appreciate.

Most importantly, the Young Masters exhibit has a long history of providing the type of encouragement needed by young artists as they development their talents.

The exhibit includes drawing, painting, photography, mixed media, sculpture and ceramics.

Refreshments and awards will be provided at the opening ceremonies on Sunday April 3, between 2-4 pm at the Kings Art Center, 605 N. Douty St., Hanford. The exhibit runs through April 30. The public is encourage to attend and support these young Kings County artists.

Glick's and Company Support VRM

Staff Reports

While Visalia Rescue Mission is celebrating their 35th anniversary, Glick's is currently in their 40th year with James and Michelle Jessen, who are approaching their one-year anniversary as the new owners.

The Jessen's are best known for their other Visalia businesses — Tazzaria, Pizano's, and Public House Downstairs (PHD) — all located in Downtown Visalia.

"Visalia Rescue Mission is a necessity in this city," Jessen said. "I mean, what would Visalia look like without them? They provide a needed service and we are very happy to support them with Mission Deli."

Mission Deli, an idea generated after much conversation with the Jessens and VRM staff, is the community's opportunity to kill two birds with one deli item. Every Thursday, Glick's will donate 50% of proceeds from their deli case to VRM — this includes various cheeses, deli meats, potato salads, and more.

When: Every Thursday - beginning March 17th

Where: Glick's and Co.• 604 W. Murray Ave., Visalia

Phone: 732-6439 (Glick's), 740-4178 (VRM) Online: glicksandco.com, vrmhope.org/tangibles

Tulare Cars at the Park April 2nd

Staff Reports

The Tulare Chamber of Commerce's annual Cars at the Park is set for Saturday, April 2, 10am-3pm at Zumwalt Park.

Caption: Tom Riggins with his 2015 Best of Show Award and 1955 Chevy 2-Door Handyman Wagon

Zumwalt Park is a location that gives participants, vendors and sponsors plenty of space to show off their products and to interact with the crowd. Three of the streets immediately adjacent to Zumwalt Park will be closed for the day: M Street, N Street and Kern Avenue. Registration will be on the corner of Kern Avenue and M Street facing east.

Additionally, spectators at this year's show will have an opportunity to win some great prizes. Raffle tickets will be sold the day of the car show for raffle items donated by vendors. For more information, call the Chamber at 686-1547, or visitwww.tularechamber.org

Keith Lindersmith and Irene Morse in *The Outgoing Tide*. Courtesy/Nancy Holley

The Outgoing Tide to Open at Ice House Theater in Visalia

Nancy Holley

The Outgoing Tide, by Bruce Graham, depicts an all too familiar story of perfect plans for the golden years set adrift by the reality of aging. Gunner and Peg are learning the truth of the adage "growing old is not for sissies."

Middle-aged sons and daughters find themselves caught between dealing with their families and coping with elderly, often ailing, parents. Gunner and Peg's son Jack is no exception. The Outgoing Tide illustrates the confusion and frustration resulting from the pull and tug of these conflicting emotions.

The three person cast has the task in two short acts of illustrating with genuineness the complexity of a 50-year relationship between husband and wife and between mother, father, and son. The joys and the sorrows, andthe mistakes we all make. As Gunner says, "Wouldn't it be great if every time 'ya screwed up big time in life, they'd let 'ya. . .ya know. . .do it over."

Keith Lindersmithis Gunner and as rehearsals progress, is working out the many facets of Gunner's character. Lindersmith reflected,"Gunner is self-made, very independent. It is difficult to figure out how to make a balance between his humorous and serious sides. He doesn't want to be a burden to Peg and is dealing with the progression of his dementia the only way he can."

As Gunner and Peg's retirement years become very different from those they envisioned, the couple have to rely on their long term relationship to sustain them. Irene Morse,as Peg,noted, "She gets her needs met with Gunner by persuasion and gently managing him.As they have lived life together, love has deepened into respect for each other's strengths as well as tolerance for each other's less attractive attributes."

To deal with Gunner's illness, both parents turn to Jack for support. The conflicting desires of his parents are heart wrenching for Jack. As he says to both of them, "I don't know what I'm supposed to do here."

When asked about Jack, Aaron Johnson explained, "At any given moment he has a multitude of overlapping emotions from utter disbelief to total acceptance. I don't have a lot of experience dealing with the play's subject matter, but I do relate to the relationship Jack has with his father."

The cast have spent time analyzing and studying their characters to ensure that they are being true to the story and to the emotions felt by average people such as Gunner, Peg, and Jack who find themselves in life altering situations.

The Outgoing Tideruns for three weekends at the Ice House Theater at Race and Santa Fe in Visalia. Evening performances are at 7:30pm on April 1, 2, 8, 9, 15 and 16; matinees are at 2pm on April 3, 10, and 17.

To purchase tickets visit the Visalia Players' website at www.visaliaplayers.org, their Facebook page "Visalia Community Players", or call 734-3900.The show contains adult content and language.

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Calendar

Mondays: Bridge Club, 9:30am-2pm
210 W Center Street Visalia, CA 93291**.** Admission is free. For additional information call: Joan Dinwiddie @ 732-0855

Mondays: Knitters, 10am-12:30pm
210 W Center Street Visalia, CA 93291**.** Everyone is welcome.

Fridays: Women's Morning Bible Study, 9am-Noon
210 W Center Street Visalia, CA 93291. For additional information call: 739-9010

Saturdays: Cup of Jazz, 10am-Noon
At Cafe 210, at 210 Center street, Visalia. Free. Led by Richard Garoogian. Call 559.730.0910 for more information.

2nd Tuesday, Monthly: Yappy Hour, 5-9pm
Well-mannered, leashed pets are welcome on the patio at the Planing Mill Artisan Pizzeria, 514 East Main Street, Suite A, in Visalia. A portion of the proceeds is donated to the Valley Oak SPCA. For more information, call 651-1111.

3rd Tuesday, Monthly: League of Women Voters Meeting, 11:45am
At Sue Sa's Club House, 699 W. Center in Visalia. Reservations are required and the public is welcome. Contact Newellgb@hotmail.com or call 732-1251.

1st Wednesday, Monthly through June 8: South Valley Guitar Society Meeting, 7-8:30pm
All acoustic musicians and music lovers are welcome to join at 1849 E. Tulare Rd. in Lindsay. The more styles of music, the better. A featured performer each month during the first half of the meeting. During the second, anyone is welcome to play. Bring snack to share. Every first Wednesday of the month through June 8. For more information, call **559-303-3943.**

1st Thursday Monthly through October: Diabetes Support Group, 5:30-7pm
Kaweah Delta Health Care District will offer a free diabetes support group through October from on the first Thursday of the month at the Kaweah Delta Chronic Disease Management Center, 325 Willis St., Visalia. Information: 624-2416.

1st Thursday, Monthly: Veterans Support Group, 5:30-7pm
Free support group for global war on terrorism & post 9-11 (Veterans Only) at the Tulare Public Library, 475 North M Street in Tulare. Facilitated by: Dr. Lance Zimmerman, Ph.D of veterans Counseling Clinic.

3rd Thursday Monthly through October: Diabetes Support Group, 5:30-7pm
Kaweah Delta Health Care District will offer a free diabetes support group through October on the third Thursday of the month at Woodlake Manor Apartments, 200 E. Sierra Avenue ,Woodlake. Information: 624-2416.

3rd Thursday, Monthly: Gathering At the Oval, 12:30-1pm
Lifting up the needs and concerns of Visalia through individual prayer and meditation at Oval Park, 808 North Court Street in Visalia. For more information, call 967-4065.

3rd Thursday, Monthly: Board Game Night, 6-7:45pm
For ages 10+ at the Visalia Branch Library, 200 West Oak Street. Sign-ups are not required. For more information, call 713-2703.

3rd Thursday, Monthly: Ladies' Night, 6-10pm
At the Clay Cafe in Visalia, 1018 E. Mineral King Ave. $10 studio fee with ceramic purchase. Includes complimentary margarita, dinner and dessert. Door prizes too! Reservations required: 733-2022

1st and 3rd Thursdays, Monthly: Central Valley Tea Party Meetings, 6pm
819 West Visalia Road, Farmersville.

Last Thursday Monthly through October: Diabetes Support Group, 5:30-7pm
Kaweah Delta Health Care District will offer a free diabetes support group through October on the last Thursday of the month at Sand Creek Apartments, 41020 Rd. 124, Orosi. Information: 624-2416.

Every Thursday in April: Back Country Backpacking, 7:45-9pm
Have you ever wanted to take an extended trip to the Sierra, but weren't sure what to bring or where to go? This class, in College of the Sequoias, San Joaquin Building, Room 1, will teach you what to bring, how to prepare and the best places to visit for your interests. Dr. Tom Lionvale instructs this course, all about fun and will be capped off by a 3-day weekend in the Sierra to let you apply what you learned. Although designed for the inexperienced, those with moderate experience have commented that the course was valuable and fun. Youth ages 10-17 are welcome to take the class, as long as they are accompanied by an adult. The trip is May 6,7 and 8. Cost is $100. For more information, call Dr. Lionvale at 733-7442.

April 5th – May 10th (Every Tuesday for 6 weeks 10am -12:30pm)
July 12th – August 16th (Every Tuesday for 6 weeks 10am – 12:30pm)
October 4th – November 8th (Every Tuesday for 6 weeks 10am – 12:30pm)
If you would like to learn how to better manage your health, sign up for a free six-week workshop presented by Kaweah Delta Health Care District. The workshop is designed to help people with ongoing health problems such as diabetes, arthritis, heart disease, asthma, or any other chronic condition. Class size is typically around 12-18 participants. Each session lasts 2 ½ hours. Topics that are covered include: dealing with difficult emotions, managing symptoms, goal setting, problem solving, nutrition, understanding medications, making informed treatment decisions, and increasing strength and stamina through better fitness. This workshop was developed by Dr. Kate Lorig at Stanford University. Participants demonstrate significant improvements in the areas covered. They also report fewer hospitalizations and outpatient visits. The Empowerment for Better Living CDSMP workshops will be offered on a quarterly basis at the newly opened Chronic Disease Management Center located at 325 Willis Street in Visalia.

March 5, 12, 18, 19: EMT Refresher Courses, 8:30am-5pm
Room: HC 2021, Porterville College. Instructor: Mr. Manny Santoyo, EMT-P. Four-Day Refresher Course - $185.00. This includes 3 days of didactic skills (24 hours) and 1 day of skills. Three-Day Refresher Course (skills not included) – $110.00.Two-Day Refresher Course (16 hours) – $80.00. One-Day Refresher Course (8 hours) – $50.00. Skills Day ONLY – $80.00.

March 5, April 2, May 7, June 4: Visalia Music School Open Mic, 7-9:30pm
Bring your Instrument. We do have drums, mic, PA System and extra guitars. We want to watch and hear you perform. 4,000 square feet of musical fun. We will be in the Performance Hall at 2332 W Whitendale Avenue, Suite A, B, & C. $5.00 at the door, Pizza and Soda for small fee. Call (559) 627-9500 for more Info.

MARCH

March 17: Opening Night of the Thursday Night Farmers Market, 5-8pm
Music by the Visalia Music School. Find the Leprechaun at the Farmers Market
Bring your little ones out for a fun St. Patrick's Day themed scavenger hunt around the Farmers Market! Find the Leprechaun hiding among various booths at the Market from 5pm to 8pm, and enter to win a prize! Hosted by the Visalia Music School! St. Patrick's Day Fresh Kitchen Cooking Demonstration. The Visalia Farmers Market offers FREE cooking demonstrations with our Fresh Kitchen chef Kellie Black of the local catering company Mache. Covering topics from what's in season to food preservation, anyone and everyone can learn something new and brush up on kitchen skills! This cooking demonstration will be featuring a traditional Irish Colcannon in honor of St. Patrick's Day!

March 18-20: South Valley Artists' Studio Tour
The Arts Consortium is offering an exclusive behind-the-scenes look into the world of local artists with the South Valley Artists? Studio Tour: Opening Doors / Opening Minds taking place March 18-19-20, 2016. View the list of participating artists at www.artsconsortium.org/svast/artists . $15 tickets went on sale in mid-February. For more information call 559-802-3266.

March 18: FREE "Drive Thru" Shredding Day for Seniors, 8am- 11pm
At Quail Park Retirement Village, 4520 W. Cypress Avenue in Visalia, Seniors may bring up to three banker's boxes for shredding. This is a perfect opportunity to destroy important documents containing personal information. E-waste will also be accepted at that time. For additional information call 624-3503.

March 18: Lemoore Recreation hosts Youth golf tournament, 12:30pm
The Lemoore Recreation Department will sponsor its annual Lemoore Youth "Fundraiser Golf Tournament at the Lemoore Municipal Golf Course. It will be a 12:30 shotgun start and four-man scramble. The cost is $60 entry fee which includes green fees and cart, dinner, tee package, range balls and cigars. All proceeds from the tourney are put into youth programs to benefit children in the Lemoore community. To find out more call the Lemoore Golf Course at 924-9658 or contact the Lemoore Recreation Department at 924-6767.

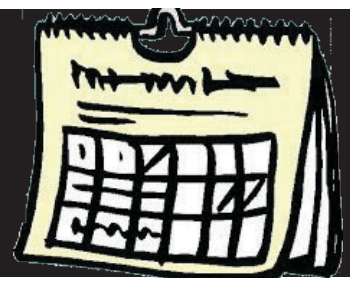
March 19: Saturday Morning Farmers Market, 8-11:30am
Music by the Visalia Music School. Kids Drum Circle at the Farmers Market

Bring your little ones out for a fun and hands on musical experience! The Visalia Music School is hosting our monthly Kids Drum Circle at the Farmers Market! Instructors play along with the kids, teach them a simple beat, and let the kids help make the music that the market enjoys. Drums are provided! This month the topic will center on protein choices and healthy meats, but feel free to ask any diet / health / food related questions from 8am to 11:30am.

March 19: Tulare Kings Writers Meeting, 10am-Noon
In the Blue Room of the Tulare County Public Library, 200 West Oak Avenue in Visalia. Highlighting the meeting will be a presentation on "Manuscript Formatting" by Billie Johnson, Publisher at Oak Tree Press. First impressions are important when submitting your work to a publisher. Learn what to do – and what not to do – if you want your manuscript to get the consideration it deserves.

March 19: Kaweah Delta Open House, 11am-2pm
Tour a 10-foot-tall replica of advanced colon cancer during an open house for the Kaweah Delta Endoscopy Department in the lobby of the Acequia Wing, 305 W. Acequia Avenue in Visalia. Ask physicians questions, and visit interactive booths, while learning how to prevent, treat and beat colon cancer. Information: 559-624-5985.

March 19: Lemon Cove Women's Club Open House, 1-4pm
At the historic Pogue Hotel, 32792 Sierra Drive (Highway 198) the refurbished



2nd floor museum will be open. $10 donation includes refreshments. For more information, call 597-2436.

March 19: Meditation Concert, 6pm
Singer Michael Crile will facilitate a meditation concert at 6 p.m. at the Center for Spiritual Living Visalia, 117 S. Locust (one block south of Main). Participants are invited to wear comfortable clothing and bring a pillow if you prefer to sit on the floor instead of a chair. $20. 559 625-2441 or www.cslvisalia.org.

March 20: Southern Gospel Music Concert, 6pm
The First Baptist Church of Dinuba is pleased to be hosting a Southern Gospel music concert on Sunday March 20, 2016 at 6:00 pm featuring "Reliance". Free admission! A free-will offering will be taken for the ministry of Reliance. For more information, please call Dennis at (559) 643-0676.

March 21-24: Horse Camp for Beginners Ages 7 to 77, 10am-12:30pm each day
For more info call 559-561-4268. All events take place at Wood N Horse Training Stables, 42846 North Fork Dr, Three Rivers.

March 23: Perfect Little Planet, 1:30pm
Discover our solar system through a new set of eyes - a family from another star system seeking the perfect vacation spot. Fly over the surface of Pluto, dive over the ice cliffs of Miranda, sail through the rings of Saturn, feel the lightning storms at Jupiter, and walk on the surface of Mars. This is the solar system journey for space travelers of all ages. At the Peña Planetarium in the Tulare County Office of Education Planetarium & Science Center, 11535 Avenue 264, Visalia. Tickets are available at the Planetarium office only after 5pm on the day of the evening show and only after 12pm on the day of the matinees. Tickets are $4 for adults and $3 for children 11 and under. Visitors may choose to see one or both matinees listed on the schedule. However, each show requires the purchase of a separate ticket. Children must be accompanied by an adult. No late seating is offered once the planetarium doors close. For information, call (559) 737-6334.

March 23: Two Small Pieces of Glass: The Amazing Telescope, 3pm
See how telescopes work and how the largest observatories in the world use these instruments to explore the mysteries of the universe. At the Peña Planetarium in the Tulare County Office of Education Planetarium & Science Center, 11535 Avenue 264, Visalia. Tickets are available at the Planetarium office only after 5pm on the day of the evening show and only after 12pm on the day of the matinees. Tickets are $4 for adults and $3 for children 11 and under. Visitors may choose to see one or both matinees listed on the schedule. However, each show requires the purchase of a separate ticket. Children must be accompanied by an adult. No late seating is offered once the planetarium doors close. For information, call (559) 737-6334.

March 24: Thursday Night Farmers Market, 5-8pm
Music by Jordan and Moore, Hunt for Good Nutrition Kids Coloring Pages at the Market.

B By completing educational coloring pages, kids will learn the nutritional composition of common foods found at the Farmers Market, what foods are in season, what foods are grown in California and the Central Valley, and kids will be encouraged to discover where their food comes from! Check in by the Market Managers Booth during market hours to play, from 4pm to 8pm!

March 26: Saturday Morning Farmers Market 8-11:30am
Music by the Visalia Music School. Make Your Own Easter Egg Maracas at the Market. Bring the kids out to make their own Easter Egg maracas using plastic eggs and spoons, and join in the musical fun at the Farmers Market! Kids can make and decorate their Easter inspired musical instruments at the craft table hosted by the Visalia Music School, and then stick around for some guided musical participation. Kids of all ages are welcome to join in the fun. The craft table will be open from 8am to 11:30am, with guided musical sessions at 10am and 11am.

March 26: Blue Ribbon March on Main Street, 9:30-11:30am
April is National Child Abuse Prevention & Awareness Month. Join CASA of Tulare County in commemorating the survivors and victims of child abuse. CASA's 21st Annual Blue Ribbon March on Main St. Speakers will include: Presiding Judge Juliet Boccone, Sheriff Mike Boudreaux, and T.C. Child Welfare Services. For more information, call CASA of Tulare County at 625-4007.

March 26: 11th Annual Eggstravaganza, 10am-1pm
The 11th Annual Eggstravaganza, sponsored by Rick's Vending, is a great family event to celebrate Spring. Activities include an egg hunt, bounce houses, raffle prizes and a special visit from the Bunny! Our Bunny Hop area for children 3 & under will be open from 10am-noon. Egg Hunt Schedule: ages 11-12, 11am; ages 9-10, 11:15am; ages 7-8, 11:30am; ages 5- 6, 11:45am; ages 3- 4, 12pm. $2 for egg hunt, some activity fees may apply. City of Visalia Parks & Recreation Business Office 559-713-4365.

March 27: Pancake Breakfast, 7-10am
Annual Kiwanis Club Easter Pancake Breakfast will be Easter Sunday, March 27th, at the Exeter Memorial Building, 324 N. Kaweah, Exeter. Tickets are $5 each and can be purchased from any club member, the Exeter Chamber or at the door.

March 28: A Chocolate Romance, 5-8pm
The Optimists Club of Exeter presents its seventh annual Chocolate Romance dessert, entree and champagne tasting and silent auction at the Exeter Memorial Building, 324 North Kaweah Avenue in Exeter. All proceeds benefit programs for students at Kaweah High School in Exeter and Deep Creek Academy in Farmersville.

March 29: 56th Annual Kiwanis Farmer of the Year Banquet, Noon
The Bel R. Martin family will be honored with the award at the Heritage Complex, 4500 S. Laspina Street in Tulare. Farmer of the Year recipients do not have to be Kiwanis members but they do have to be very active in the community. The banquet will include a biography on the Martin family and a video honoring all past recipients of the award. Tickets are $25 in advance and $30 at the door and can be purchased by contacting Celeste Moore at Rabobank at 559-686-5854.

March 29: Exercise & You Lecture Series at The Lifestyle Center, 6-7pm
The Lifestyle Center (TLC) invites the community to attend FREE informative lecture series presented by TLC Exercise Physiology Staff. Lectures are from 6:00pm to 7:00pm at TLC conference room located 5105 W. Cypress Ave in Visalia. Please review the following dates and topics and join us. Tonight: Exercise to Enhance Posture, presented by: Kala Donnelly, BS, CSCS

March 31: Thursday Night Farmers Market from 5-8pm
Music by the Visalia Music School. Kids Drum Circle at the Farmers Market. Bring your little ones out for a fun and hands on musical experience! The Visalia Music School is hosting our monthly Kids Drum Circle at the Farmers Market! Instructors play along with the kids, teach them a simple beat, and let the kids help make the music that the market enjoys. Drums are provided!

APRIL

April 1: Central Valley Parkinson's Support Group, 10:30am
In the Pre School Center of Visalia United Methodist Church located at 5200 West Caldwell, Visalia, CA. Program – Q & A session with neurologist Dr. Ziman. Plan to join us for lunch and good conversation after the meeting: www.cvpsg.net or cvparkinsons@gmail.com or 559-563-0725.

April 1: 11th Annual Birdhouse Auction, 6:30-10pm
Join Habitat for Humanity at the Wyndham Hotel, 9000 Airport Dr. in Visalia, for the 11th Annual "Global Village" Birdhouse Auction and celebrate Habitat's work around the world. This fun and unique event supports Habitat for Humanity's programs throughout Tulare County. The 2016 event is highlighting Habitat for Humanity's efforts in over 85 countries. $75 per individual ticket or a table of 8 for $600. For more information contact Deanna at 559-734-4040 or email Habitat at info@hfhtc.org

April 2: 2nd Lawn-Free Garden Tour, 9am-3pm
As more of us determine to do our part to conserve water, Sequoia Garden Club will have five beautiful lawn-free landscapes on view. Come see eye-catching gardening ideas—-and be inspired! Cost: Tickets-$15 - are available at: Leo's Nursery, Sequoia Plaza Flowers, Luis's Nursery and Curry Copy. $20 day of. Contact: dmekeel@att.net

April 2: Optimist Club's "Chocolate Romance" A Food Lover's Affair, 5-8pm
Optimist's Club's "Chocolate Romance" will be held at the Exeter Memorial Building, 324 N. Kaweah, in Exeter. The Optimist Club of Exeter presents its Eighth Annual Chocolate Romance entree, dessert and champagne tasting and silent auction event. Tickets are $35 each and can be purchased in person at Main Street Exeter, 145 N. "E" Street, or The *Foothills Sun Gazette* Newspaper, 120 N. "E" Street, in Exeter. To purchase tickets online visit: www.optimistsofexeter.org. For more information, call (559) 909-2996.

April 7: 5th Annual Downtown Visalia Wine Walk, 5:30-8:30pm
Sponsored by Chelsea Street Boutique and Central Valley Community Bank. T You may purchase your tickets with a Visa, Master Card, American Express or PayPal online at www.downtownvisalia.com or by calling 559.732.7737. Our Downtown Visalians office is located at 119 S. Church Street, between Main and Acequia. Tickets are $35 before March 27 and $40 after. You must be 21 to participate in the tastings. Wine glasses, wristbands and tickets will be available the day of the event at the Fox Theateron Main Street. For more information, visit www.DowntownVisalia.com or call 559.732.7737.

April 7: College of the Sequoia's Cultural Historical Awareness Program (CHAP), 7pm
Speaking on George Washington and Alexander Hamilton, with Professor Stephen F. Knott, at the COS Visalia campus Ponderosa Lecture Hall. For more information on these and other events, contact COS Public Information (publicinfo@cos.edu).

April 8-10: 43rd annual Jazz Affair
$95.00 for 3 day badge. Children 1/2 price. Daily badges available. 4 sites with free bus service between sites. High Sierra Jazz Band is the Host band. Others are Au Brothers, Blue Street, Bob Dragga, Cornet Chop Suey, Flip Oakes Quartet, Grand Dominion, High Street, Kylie Castro, Jerry Krahn Quartet, Night Blooming Jazzmen, Reedly River

Sports

Mission Oak Hawks Win Central Section Again

Stefan Barros

The 2015-16 Mission Oak Hawks Girls Basketball team have won the Central Section CIF championship game and title again, for a second year in a row.

Unfortunately, the team was unable to win the following opening game of the State playoffs.

Coming off of the successes of last season, Head Coach Dave Caetano had set goals for the team; one of them was to win Valley, and another goal was to win a state playoff game.

"We hadn't faced a team like that before. They played press, they shot the three. They were just better than us. It was a learning experience, and we'll use it as a positive for us."

Despite the loss in the state playoffs Mission Oak had a 26-7 record coming off a season in which they also won the Valley championship.

Caetano is happy that the team repeated as Valley champs, but does wish the team was able to do more damage in state playoffs.

"Like any other team, we set goals at the beginning of the year. The goal was to win Valley and be able to win a state playoff game or two. We weren't able to do that this year, but once we establish ourselves and put ourselves in that environment, and get acclimated to that environment we'll be okay," he said.

"Right now we're getting everyone's best effort, but it's rewarding to see the hard work pay off. During the summer I tried to put them against some quality teams, and get them ready for the elite programs they'll see in the playoffs."

Compared to last year's team, Caetano did see improvements, and believes that the experiences of their run last season propelled them to success this season.

"We had a year under our belt," he said."We were a stronger team this year. The level of competition was better than last year. Our non-conference schedule was all Division One teams, and I'm scheduling the same next year.

"We could have won all of those games too, and then we faced a much better team in the state playoffs this year as well. The level of competition in state is just a different beast. I'm going to try and get us in an LA tournament next year so the environment is not foreign for us."

As far as individual players are concerned, Caetano was happy with the improvements of some of his younger players, and sees a bright future for his program because of that.

"Amanda Arellano, a sophomore, made big improvements," he said."She got injured last year, so it was great to have her back this year. Jada Muller, Aubrey Cardoza and the bench players stepped up as well. It will be hard to replace Tristen (Myers) and the other seniors, but we have competitive players coming in, and they're getting better. They're committed to working in the summer as well."

On the topic of the seniors Caetano had to work with this season, he talked about how lucky he felt to have such experienced players coming back to his roster in 2015-16 and the great chemistry the team was able to carry over to this season.

"Not having to start from ground zero was great," he said."They all get along, and you can't coach chemistry. We've done team dinners, gone other basketball games together. Its tight-knit group and we're lucky to have that.

Mission Oak won the CIF central central section championship for the 2nd year in a row at Selland Arena on March 5. Courtesy/Mission Oak High School

"Even the new players are getting acclimated to the way we like to do things. They're all getting better, but as we found, we still have a long way to go. We have the athletes; they just have to be able to execute the system."

Throughout the season, Coach Caetano paid close attention to a deficiency that his team had all season, which came back to bite the team in their state playoff loss to Sonora High School of La Habra.

"We had problems defending the three. Throughout the season, if a team was beating us, it was because we couldn't defend that shot. We're going to man defense next year, and we'll work on man defense all summer. We'll have more flexibility defensively, and as a coach you want as many options as possible."

Caetano said he hopes the defense can improve next year, the way the offense improved this year.

"We had improvement in our offense," he said."We averaged 56 points a game and are capable of doing more. Our bench is strong, and the offense really stepped up this year. We know we can score with anybody. In the state playoff game though, we just couldn't get into our offense because of the press defense. If we have the same improvement in defense that we had on offense, we'll be in good shape."

Cam Olson Named WHCC Falcons Head Football Coach

Staff Reports

Cam Olson, who served as the interim Head Coach of the West Hills College Coalinga Falcons' football team for their 2014-2015 football season, has been officially named the team's Head Coach.

Olson has been with the Falcons since March of 2014, when he filled roles such as the team's Assistant Head Coach, Offensive Coordinator, and Recruiting Coordinator. He was appointed as the interim Head Coach last June.

"We haven't skipped a beat this off-season in our work to build this program," said Olson. "Our player development and recruiting efforts thus far is evidence to me of that. I'm really excited to be able to further grow our relationship with the Coalinga community and continue our efforts toward student success on and off the field. The culture that we started building here last season will continue to develop."

Olson came to the WHCC football team with 15 years of coaching experience and five prior seasons of head coaching experience, including this past season with the Falcons.

During the 2014-2015 season, he led the team to an overall record of 9-2, an undefeated 6-0 in conference record, and the NCFC Golden Coast League conference championship.

West Hills College Coalinga Head Football Coach Cam Olson

He was named the Golden Coast League Coach of the Year.

"During Cam's time with us as Assistant Coach and as the interim Head Coach, he brought a sense of stability and a vision that focuses on integrity and leadership on the field and in the classroom," said Dr. Carole Goldsmith, President of West Hills College Coalinga. "Cam is someone who understands the student-athlete experience and knows what is needed to excel at the highest levels of college athletics. He is a quality coach and an outstanding person who will help us build a team of winners both on and off the field."

Athletics Director Mark Arce added that Olson has done a great deal for the program.

"Coach Olson has done a fantastic job since his arrival on campus," he said. "He has recruited talented players who have had tremendous success on the football field and have been great ambassadors for our campus in the community. We were very fortunate to have Cam as our interim head coach last season as his leadership produced a conference championship and the opportunity to host a championship bowl game. I am excited to have Coach Olson as our permanent head football coach and am looking forward to the continued growth of our football program."

2016 Porterville Corporate Games Set to Begin

Staff Reports

Let the games begin! Registrations are now being accepted for the sixth annual Porterville Corporate Games presented by the Tule River Indian Tribe.

Scheduled for April 11-21, the Games are the premier business-to-business competition in the Porterville area.

Companies of all sizes compete against each other in a variety of fun activities all vying for the most accumulated points and ownership of the coveted Corporate Cup. This year's activities include disc golf, spelling bee, volleyball, home run derby, bowling, foot golf, darts, hoop shootout and an obstacle course.

Porterville Corporate Games is the ultimate team building experience and a chance to engage in the community in a unique way. Only the first 16 teams to register will be accepted and spots are filling up fast.

Get more information at portervillecorporategames.com or call (559) 782-7521. Follow Parks and Leisure Services on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram for all the latest updates.

Participants must be 16 years or older and work for the organization full or part time, or active members of the participating church/club/agency.

Spouses of qualified players are allowed to engage at the discretion of the sponsoring organization.

Live Oak Middle School Student, Griswold Recognized at State Capital

Staff Reports

Eighth-grader Tyce Griswold of Live Oak Middle School was named a state winner in the Imagine this… Story Writing Contest. Winning stories were illustrated by selected high school art students and published in a book. This year's book debuted on March 16, the same day student authors were honored at an awards ceremony at the California State Capitol Building.

Griswold's story, The Calf Ranch, was selected through two judging panels, from thousands of stories written throughout California classrooms. Tyce Griswold, his parents, Danielle Nunes, JJ Nunes, and Scott Griswold, and his teacher, Sharla Ashburn, traveled to Sacramento for a special day recognizing this achievement. He participated in a press interview, signed autographs and met legislative representatives.

The idea for Griswold's story, The Calf Ranch came from his experience helping out on his family calf ranch at Nunes and Sons Dairy. The narrative explains the daily routine that is followed. "I hope readers will enjoy learning about all the work that goes into caring for calves," Griswold said.

Teacher Sharla Ashburn said the contest allows students to develop writing skills while expressing themselves creatively. "This writing contest helps students tap into their creativity and what they love about agriculture. I can see that Tyce really cares deeply about his experiences on the calf ranch, and those experiences are making him a responsible young man," Ashburn said.

The contest was open to all California third through eighth-grade students and was hosted by the California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom. The contest started in 1993 as a way to help students explore where their food comes from in a creative and rewarding way. The Foundation began printing books in 2007 to showcase students' achievements. The contest meets Common Core State Education Standards for narrative and informative writing.

The Imagine this… Awards Ceremony took place in the Governor's Council Room at the California State Capitol. The celebration was part of a larger California Agriculture Day event happening on the West Steps of the Capitol.

More information about the Imagine this… Story Writing Contest can be found at www.LearnAboutAg.org/imaginethis. The book, Imagine this… Stories Inspired by California Agriculture 2015 was madeavailable for purchase on the website, after the March 16 debut.

CFAITC is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that works with K-12 grade-level teachers, students and community leaders, to enhance education using agricultural examples. The organization's mission is to increase awareness and understanding of agriculture among California's educators and students. The ultimate vision is an appreciation of agriculture by all.

Beatles Tribute Coming to Lindsay

Staff Reports

In My Life - A Musical Theatre Tribute to The Beatles is the award-winning musical biography of The Beatles through the eyes of manager Brian Epstein and features the live music from renowned tribute band Abbey Road.

The Beatles come to life on the Lindsay Theatre stageon April 7, 8, and 9 at 7:30pm and on April 10 at 2pm.

Tickets are $15 for adults and $10 for students. Get tickets at lindsaycommunitytheater.com. For more information call 284 2223.

More than just a Beatles tribute concert, In My Life gives the audience a chance to "be there" at pivotal moments in the extraordinary career of the Beatles--from Liverpool's legendary Cavern Club, to The Ed Sullivan Show, Shea Stadium's 50,000 + screaming fans, and their final live performance on the rooftop of their Apple Corp offices.

With manager Brian Epstein serving as narrator, In My Lifeallows the audience to get a glimpse inside the world of the Beatles from their point of view, as well as hear some of the greatest songs ever written.

"The show delivers!" said the L.A. Times. "If you see one tribute show, see this one--smart and loads of fun," said the O.C. Register. "This is the ticket for you," said the Idaho Statesman.

The Abbey Road band recently concluded a three-month residency at Harrah's Reno showroom. The band also headlines Harrah's Tahoe, Harrah's Rincon, Pala Casino and House of Blues. Band members are age appropriate for the Beatles (22 - 32 years of age).

This show is appropriate for all ages. The Lindsay Community Theater is located at 190 N Elmwood, in the heart of downtown Lindsay.

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Boys & Girls Club 'Graduate for Mas'

The Boys & Girls Clubs of the Sequoias was chosen by the Taco Bell Foundation to receive a 'Graduate for Mas' grant in the amount of $17,500 for the current grant year.

The grant is allowing the Boys & Girls Clubs at Burton Middle School, Strathmore, Tulare and Visalia sites to provide tools and resources to teens and track their progress toward graduation and life goals.

Graduate for Mas is challenging the teens to pledge to graduate high school on time, and be college or career ready.

For additional information on the grant, you can contact Carri Chambers or Lynn Dodds at the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Sequoias, 592-4074.

How Many Buttons Do We Have?

Cynthia Simonian

It's hard to be exact. The counting continues daily. Thanks to the *Valley Voice*, the *Visalia Times-Delta,* and *The Fresno Bee* and the word of mouth of so many teachers, students, pastors and friends buttons have been donated continuously for the last 3 1/2 years.

They come in the mail, get dropped off at the door, sometimes are delivered to my house, my husband picks them up from Fresno, and often I pick up a batch from a local caller.

Did I mention the Senior Center? Tons of buttons from them.

Also Westgate Gardens Convalescent Center - thanks to Cathy Meis who is one of their activity directors. Lois Manning from St. Mary's Catholic Church has donated numerous times. The names are far too many to list here.

We definitely have more than 3 million. I don't think we have 4 million... yet. The goal is 6 million. They are stored in US Mail Boxes, shoe boxes, large plastic pretzel containers, and plain old buckets.

We are proud of the efforts by so many good people in Visalia, Tulare, Exeter, Three Rivers, Fresno, Kingsburg, Sacramento, and around the United States and even Europe.

What will we do with 6 million buttons? Our community will build a memorial to the 6 million men, women and children who perished at the hands of Nazi Germany.

So many of us have been touched by that war. My grandmother's family was sent to Auschwitz. As the youngest of four, we lived together, my parents and grandparents in a big house in Los Angeles.

My neighbors were survivors - they had stories to tell and the infamous number tattooed on their arms. But in my family, we didn't speak about the war or our lost extended family.

My grandparents, Sarah & Remi Peers, were very very quiet people. They would speak Flemish amongst themselves; now I know why - - they protected us from knowing. I too suppose my parents felt too fortunate, and wanted us to also feel fortunate.

Indeed we were, and are.. fortunate. We all are. Genocide is the systematic and State sponsored murder of a specific cultural, ethnic, racial, or religious group of people.

The Nazi's targeted and murdered many more than 6 million Jews. They targeted and killed Jehovah's Witnesses, Poles, homosexuals, Clergy that were politically opposed, and the handicapped, --- 11 million in all.

This was the Nazi's version of genetic engineering aimed at protecting the superiority of the German genetic code.

Please help us build a reminder that genocide is inhumane. We must teach social justice, equality and democratic principles.

We need to combat the escalation of prejudice, hate and violence by standing up against bullying and racism. Please help us? Will you host a button container at your place of business, school, or classroom?

If you have loose buttons... we have a home for them. Call me.

Cynthia Fischer Simonian
Executive Director (559) 308-1333

Three Rivers, CA ~ April 8, 9 & 10

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